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A CRITICAL COMMENTARY ON THE SONGS OF THE RETURN WITH A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION AND INDEXES.

By DANIEL GURDEN STEVENS, Jr.

PART III.

EXPLANATORY NOTES.

[CONTINUED FROM LAST NUMBER.]

Notes on Psalm 121.

This Psalm has seemed to lend considerable support to the theory which makes these pieces *Songs of Feast-Journeys*. The contents clearly suggest preparation for a journey to Jerusalem; and many exegetes have concluded that the poem was intended to be used by pilgrims, and that it describes the approach to the Holy City.* Thus Hengstenberg terms it an "Evening Song of the Sacred Pilgrim-Journeys" (*Abendlied der heiligen Pilgerzuege*), and thinks it was to be sung when the travelers had come in sight of Jerusalem. In a somewhat similar way Tiling conjectures that the Psalm was sung by the exiles on the Return when they were at last able to see the mountains of Judea in the distance. But it is clear that the terms of the description do not admit of such an interpretation. Nothing in the Psalm shows that the journey is nearing the close or even that it has been begun. The undertaking is something extraordinary and attended with no little danger, and some persons hesitate to incur the risks involved, so that most emphatic assurance of divine protection is required. Hence the six-fold repetition of the word שֹׁמֵר *keep*; in this, however, Hitzig finds an allusion to the Samaritans שֹׁמֵרִים between whom and the Jews there was border-strife in the Maccabean period (cf. 1 Macc. 10:30-38;

* Clarisse, Hupf., Kamph., et al.

11:28). For the same reason the Psalm might just as well be assigned to an earlier time, but in neither case is the situation pictured in the Song accounted for.

Yet more unsatisfactory is the explanation given by Wolfson: the Psalm, he thinks, refers to the captivity of the ten tribes; Israel, as in former years, had forsaken JHVH to worship the heathen deities whose shrines were situated on the hills; the poet now seeks to win back the faithless people to the true God. The language of the Psalm does not justify such an idea. The hills, to all appearances, are not the seat of heathen worship, but the objective point to reach which assistance is needed; a contrast between JHVH and idols is nowhere visible, nor yet an exhortation to repent and turn to God, such as would be expected in a piece of the nature Wolfson takes this to be.

The description fits the state of affairs among the Jews in Babylonia when preparation was being made for the Return. Many persons unwilling to leave their possessions, as well as others who were really timid, found in the dangers of travel an excuse for remaining behind. Thus the Psalm might refer to events that occurred in 537, and some (Rosenm., Delitzsch) have so explained it. But it fits even better the situation described in Ezra's *Memoirs* (Ezra 8:21 sqq. cf. v. 31); Ezra and his companions had no military escort to protect them on the journey, and so on the eve of their departure they sought help from God against the enemies they might meet on the way. The Song might very well have been employed in this service of fasting and prayer.

The verses are closely connected in pairs, which unite to form two stanzas: (a) vs. 1-4, an antiphonal section containing a dialogue between a faint-hearted or sceptical person (vs. 1, 3) and a true believer (vs. 2, 4);—(b) vs. 5-8, an inspiring address by the priest or a chorus to the congregation, confirming the statements of the second speaker.

(1) *I lift up*, etc., i. e. *I raise my eyes and look*; a shortened form of the familiar expression in the Pentateuch,* e. g. in Gen. 13:10: וַיִּשָּׂא לוֹט אֶת-עֵינָיו וַיִּרְא And Lot raised his eyes and saw; cf. Gen. 13:14; 31:1, 2; 17:2; 22:4, 13. Notions of pride and worship (Wolfson) are not necessarily connected with the phrase, but must be indicated by the context; cf. 2 Kgs. 19:22: אֵת מִי חָרַפְתָּ וְגִדַּפְתָּ וְעַל מִי הִרִימוֹת קוֹל וְתִשָּׂא מְרוֹם עֵינֶיךָ Whom dost thou reproach and blaspheme, and against whom hast thou lifted up thy voice, and haughtily raised thy eyes? Deut. 4:19; Ezek. 18:6, 15, 12.

Some† suppose that the mountains of Jerusalem, especially Zion where God sits (Ps. 87:1; 15:1; 3:5; 43:3; Isa. 2:3), are meant, and that the speaker looks thither for help. Others (Langer) regard the mountains as the *Kiblah* toward

* Cf. the Assyrian expression *ina ittaši* "to lift up the eyes" to some one, i. e. be fond of him; *Nimrod Epos* VI., 3.

† Hupf., Hgstb., Bæthgen.

which the Jews turned in praying; cf. 1 Kgs. 8:35, 38, 44, 48; Dan. 6:10. Qamchi thought of watchers on the hills anxiously looking for the approach of help. Similarly Tholuck had in mind the men in a beleaguered fortress, who look toward the surrounding hills on the summits of which friends hastening to give aid will first be seen. It is clear from vs. 3 sqq. that protection during a journey is the help needed. And it seems most natural to take that point toward which the speaker looks as the place he desires to reach; when he considers the various dangers of the journey, he realizes the need of potent assistance and so propounds the serious question. The mountains, i. e. those of Palestine in general (Delitzsch), stand as goal-posts marking the journey's end; they are not the source of help, for the speaker does not know whence aid may be derived, and to him the proposed undertaking seems therefore impracticable.

(2) Many exegetes* hold that the poet raises the question in v. 1 simply to give occasion for the answer here, which is thus strongly emphasized. Others† think of the two sides of an individual's character; the better self answers the question of doubt. It appears more likely that a dialogue between the representatives of two elements in the congregation is intended here; the voice of faith responds to the question inspired by timidity and unbelief. Mention of the mountains suggests to the believer the holy hill of JHVH, and the answer springs at once to his lips. The omnipotence of Israel's God, manifested in his works, is, he declares, surety for the safe conduct of the travelers.

(3) Vs. 3 and 4 are usually taken as a continuation of the response‡ in v. 2, or are included with vs. 5-8 to form a chorus (Clarisse, Rosenm.) or address to the congregation. Either alternative is forbidden by the form and language of the two verses. Thus v. 3 is plainly addressed to the person who thinks help will come from God, and expresses the hope that his expectation may not be vain. In strong opposition to the idea of such a possibility the believer declares his unfaltering faith in God's character as a defender (so Olshausen). Any other explanation involves unnecessary difficulty and obscurity. It is hard to believe that the same person would first put in the weak form of a wish the idea he immediately afterwards affirms so vehemently. Again the very fact that the speaker of v. 3 suggests that God may fall asleep seems to show he did not place much reliance on assistance from such a quarter; the words appear to be those of a sceptic and fit very well in the mouth of the speaker of v. 1. With a sneer he reminds the believer of the long and difficult way; rivers must be crossed and mountains ascended; robbers may lie in ambush by the road, wild beasts will prowl about the camps. So that it is to be hoped that the keeper will prove efficient and vigilant.

* Hupf., Hgstb., Del., Cheyne.

† Kamph., Bæthgen.

‡ De Wette, Del., Hitz., Bæthgen.

To stumble is aptly said with reference to travel on a long journey. Stumbling is also a figure of calamity; cf. Deut. 32:35; Ps. 66:9; 38:17; 73:2; 55:23; 10:6; 17:5.

Slumber; cf. 1 Kgs. 18:27: **כִּי שָׁיחַ וְכִי שָׁיַג לוֹ וְכִי דָרַךְ לוֹ אוֹלִי יִשָּׁן** *Either he is meditating or has gone aside, or is on a journey; perhaps he is asleep and must be awaked.* By such notions the heathen excused the indifference of their deities to their petitions.* And to Israel, oppressed and suffering, it seemed at times as if JHVH were asleep; cf. Ps. 44:24: **עוֹרָה לְנַפְחִי אֶרְנִי הַקִּיצָה אֶל תּוֹנָה לְנַפְחִי** *Awake! why sleepest thou, O Lord? Awake! do not cast us off forever.*

(4) *Behold*—an emphatic interjection calling attention to the unqualified rejection of the aspersion cast on JHVH's faithfulness. *He who keeps Israel never sleeps*; neither will he carelessly allow himself to become wrapped in heavy slumber, nor, overcome with weariness, will he seek a moment's repose. As in the days of old, in the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night he led Israel through the wilderness (cf. Ps. 78:14), so now he will exercise constant, unflinching care for the returning exiles.

(5) The difference between the character of the address which now begins and the speech in v. 3 is self-evident. Olshausen correctly regards this stanza as the confirmation, by higher, priestly authority, of the believer's remarks. The several verses reiterate in detailed exposition the thought contained in vs. 2, 4.

JHVH is thy keeper, you do well to repose trust in him. Consider his power and faithfulness and remember he is your God; in view of this well may you say: **בְּשָׁלוֹם יַחְדּוֹ אֶשְׁכְּבָה וְאִישָׁן כִּי אַתָּה יְהוָה לְבָדָר לְבָטָח תּוֹשִׁיבֵנִי** *In peace will I both lay me down and sleep, for thou, JHVH, alone makest me dwell in safety* (Ps. 4:9).

JHVH is thy protection, literally: *shadow*;† this is used as a figurative expression for protection in general; cf. Ps. 17:8, 9; 91:1-4; Num. 14:9; Isa. 51:16. But the term seems to refer primarily to shelter from the heat of the sun; cf. Isa. 32:2: **כַּצֵּל סֶלַע כְּבֹד בְּאֶרֶץ עִיפָה** *As the shadow of a great rock in a desert*; Isa. 25:4; 4:6. In the present passage both senses, literal and figurative, find application.

JHVH will stand at the right hand of the believer, i. e., will act as a champion, or to use a familiar phrase, as a *right hand man*;‡ similarly in Ps. 110:5 it is said of Zerubbabel: **אֶרְנִי עַל יְמִינְךָ מִיּוֹם אָפּוּ מַלְכִּים** *The Lord on thy*

* Cf. the Iliad, I., 606.

† This hemistich might be divided into two separate sentences, but the division would have no effect on the sense, except to emphasize the latter clause.

‡ It should be noticed that the same position is occupied by accusers; thus Zechariah (c. 3:4) represents Satan standing in a hostile attitude at the right hand of Joshua; cf. Ps. 109:6.

§ Cf. Johns Hopkins University Circulars, July 1894, p. 110.

right hand will smite kings in the day of his wrath; and again in 109:31 God is represented as the savior of his oppressed servant: **כִּי יַעֲמֵד לְיָמִין אֲבִיוֹן לְהוֹשִׁיעַ מִשְׁפָּטֵי נַפְשׁוֹ** *For he stands at the right hand of the unfortunate to save him from those who condemn him.* With such a defender Israel need have no fear.

(6) Some (Hupf. Kamph) have thought that the sun and moon are mentioned here simply in parallelism as in Josh. 10:12, 13; Ps. 72:5; Is. 24:23, and deWette thinks the verse is a poetic form of the thought that neither by day nor by night will any mishap befall the travelers; this may be. But there is also sufficient reason for naming these luminaries as agents of mischief. The particular evil to be feared from the sun was of course the excessive heat which threatened sun-stroke; a familiar case of this is described in 2 Kgs. 4:18-20; cf. Isa. 49:10; Jon. 4:8. The moon is named because to it are referred the rapid fall in temperature after sun-down, the extreme cold of the night and the injurious effects of this atmospheric change upon a man's physical system. The eyes especially are affected with a painful malady. The Arabs still attribute blindness to the influence of the moon's rays on those who sleep in the open air. Then too the moon-beams were thought to produce an injurious effect on the mind.* Grætz also finds in the verse an allusion to the Persian idea that the sun and moon exercised a demoniacal influence. Heat and cold, however, are the evils on which special stress is to be laid; cf. Gen. 31:40: **הֵייתִי בַיּוֹם אֹכְלָנִי חֶרֶב וּקְרָח בַּלַּיְלָה** *Thus I was: by day heat consumed me and frost by night*; Jer. 36:30.

(7) Not only from ordinary dangers which must in the nature of the case be encountered, but from all perils, anticipated or unexpected, JHVH will deliver his people; their lives are safe in his hands.]

(8) *Going out and coming in*; Clarisse thinks of the safe arrival of the pilgrims in Jerusalem and their return home. In the formula all the acts of daily life are summed up†; cf. Deut. 28:6: **בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּבוֹאֶךָ וּבְצֵאתֶךָ** *Blessed wilt thou be when thou comest in and blessed when thou goest out*; Ps. 139:2, 3; Deut. 31:2; 28:19; 1 Sam. 29:6; 2 Sam. 3:25. The picture from which the phraseology is derived is given in Ps. 104:23: **יֵצֵא אָדָם לַפְעֵלוֹ וּלְעִבְרָתוֹ עַד עֶרֶב** *Man goes forth to his work and his labor until the evening*; cf. also Job. 34:21; Ps. 17:5. Most interpreters therefore see in this verse and the one preceding a general blessing on all the activities of life. But the words have also a special application here; to the exiles about to start out on the long march they come with peculiar force: The Lord will ensure your departure from Babylon and your

* The same idea finds expression in the Greek *σεληνιαζεσθαι* (Matt. 4:24; 17:15) as well as in the English phrase *moon-struck*, and the more commonly used Latin derivative *lunatic*.

† Cf. the words of Chrysostom in his note on this verse: *ἐν τούτοις ὁ βίος ἅπας, ἐν εἰσόδου καὶ ἐξόδου.*

safe arrival in Jerusalem; but not only this; he will bring all your undertakings to a happy, successful termination. He will conduct you even to the end of life's pilgrimage.

Notes on Psalm 130.

That the first section (vs. 1-6) is not the cry of a suffering individual, but that these are the words of the congregation is made plain by the address in v. 7; the references are then to the church-nation.* The allusions in the piece are, however, so general as scarcely to admit of determining the definite historical situation; and some commentators have therefore contented themselves with giving simply a general explanation. Others have ventured upon a more exact interpretation.

To Olshausen the song suggests the later times of the Maccabean war; while Hitzig refers the piece to the time when Jonathan had been captured by strategy in Ptolemais, and the people, alarmed at the threatening aspect of affairs, had assembled at Jerusalem where Simon sought to reassure them (cf. 1 Macc. 12:53 to 13:3); the redemption of Jonathan was then the most important question. This special personal reference is altogether unwarranted by the language of the Psalm; and there is nothing in the situation described in the poem that suggests reference of it to the times spoken of in 1 Macc. 12. The piece was clearly composed for the congregation at a time when the conviction of guilt rested heavily on the conscience of the people, and when the need of divine forgiveness was keenly felt. So Wolfson not inaptly supposes that the song was intended to be sung at the time of the evening sacrifice when the offering was made in atonement for the sins of the day; then, interpreting the dawn for which the watchers wait as a figure of release from captivity and Israel as meaning the ten tribes languishing in exile, he considers the piece as a prayer of the Israelites for their return. DeWette thinks these are the words of a Jew in exile, and to Grætz the lament seems to indicate the exilic period. Hengstenberg assigns it to the same period as the other anonymous pilgrim-songs, i. e. to the early years of the Return. The conjecture of Rosenmüller that the Psalm was first sung at the general penitential day (Ezra, cc. 9; 10) cannot be proved. That it may have been used in the public worship on Atonement Day is not improbable in view of its special fitness for such an occasion. It is also quite possible that it was originally composed for use on the day when the community, after a solemn service of confession and prayer, entered into a covenant to keep the law (Neh. 9). But while the definite reference must remain uncertain, the application of the Psalm to the circumstances and conditions of the colony is plain. Like Pss. 126 and 129 it breathes a spirit of hopefulness, of trust and confidence that JHVH will eventu-

*R. Smend, *Ueber das Ich der Psalmen* in the *Zeitschrift fuer die alttestamentl. Wissenschaft*, VIII., 137.

ally work salvation and remove all causes of distress with all the results of sin.

Ps. 130 belongs to the class of Penitential Psalms of which 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 143, are other prominent examples. It was a favorite with Luther, who termed it, together with 32, 51, 143, *Psalmi Paulini*; "in fact, there appear in Ps. 130 the condemnation of the natural man, free grace, and the spiritual character of redemption in truly Pauline expression" (Delitzsch). Tholuck also recognizes that "the Psalmist promulgates here the true evangelical doctrine of the New Testament, teaching according to Ex. 2:6, 7, that the enduring existence and prosperity of sinful people is only possible through divine forgiveness."

On this Psalm compare especially Professor Haupt's article in *HEBRAICA* II., Jan. 1886, pp. 98 sqq.

(1) The congregation directs its petition to JHVH not "out of the deep abyss of sin" (Geier), but from the deep waves of distress and need which have passed over them in consequence of sins, and in which they are sunken as in waters;* cf. especially Ps. 69 (a Song of the Exile): 2, 3 **הושיעני אלהים כי באו מים עד נפש טבעתי בין מצולה ואין מעמד באתי במעמקי מים ושבלת שטפתי** *Save me, O God, for waters have come unto my life; I am plunged in deep mire, and there is no standing place; I have entered deep waters and a stream has engulfed me*; also vs. 15, 16; Ps. 124:4, 5; Isa. 51:10; Ezek. 27:34; Ps. 40:3.

Out of the depths I cry; the expression is pregnant, embodying at once a declaration of the suffering by which the congregation is oppressed, and the plea for succor. Our condition is most miserable; wearied and worn with the buffetings of waves of adverse circumstances that threaten our ruin, we turn our eyes to thee, praying for help that will bring our trembling feet to stand on a rock of refuge; cf. Jon. 2:3, 4, 5; Ps. 22:22.

(2) The people realize their weakness and the need of superhuman assistance. *O JHVH! hearken!* i. e., hear and answer favorably; cf. Ps. 120:1 note; 27:7: **שמע יהוה קולי אקרא וחנני וענני** *Hear, JHVH, my voice when I cry; and have mercy upon me and answer me. Let thine ears be attentive*; not dull or heavy, so that they cannot hear (Isa. 59:1), but ready to receive the cry of the people; Ps. 34:16: **עיני יהוה אל צדיקים ואזניו אל שועתם** *The eyes of JHVH are toward the righteous and his ears are (open) to their cry*; Ps. 18:6; 28:1, 2; Neh. 1:6, 11.

(3) *If thou shouldst keep in memory men's sins*, i. e. put them to their account, cherish against the offenders the stern purpose of justice and hold them to a strict accountability for their transgressions; or, as Ewald puts it: if thou dost not overlook, condone, forgive. *Who could endure?* Who, then, could stand examination in trial before God, endure the strict scrutiny of his doings and be acquit-

*Rosenm., de Wette, Langer, Hitz., Grætz, Hupf.

ted of guilt? cf. Ps. 1:5; 109:8. The thought is not: who can maintain a stand against the divine vengeance (Langer), or endure the punishment inflicted by God (Clarisse); for there is here no question of the omnipotence of the Judge; cf. Nah. 1:6: לפני זעמו מי יעמד ומי יקום בחרון אפו חמתו נתכה כאש והצרים נתצו ממנו *Before his wrath who can stand, and who can endure the heat of his anger; his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him*; Ps. 76:8; Isa. 57:16. But the point is the universal culpability of mankind; no one can establish his innocence before God's judgment-seat; cf. Ps. 143:2: *But enter not thou into judgment with thy servant*, כי לא יצדק לפניך *for before thee no living being can be justified*; Ps. 14:3; 53:4. The main idea of this portion of the Psalm appears in Ezra 9:15: יהוה אלהי ישראל צדיק אתה כי נשארנו פליטה כהיום הזה הננו לפניך באשמתנו כי אין צדיק אתה *O JHVH, God of Israel, thou art righteous, for we remain surviving as it is this day; behold we are before thee in our sins, for we cannot stand before thee in regard to this*, i. e. God had vindicated his faithfulness by procuring the release of the people from captivity; but they, untaught by past experiences, had again broken the law. God was righteous, but their guilt was established; and convicted by Ezra's preaching, they could only hang their heads in shame and penitence before God, who, should he deal according to the letter of the law, must punish them. The analogies between the ideas in Ezra's prayer (c. 9:5 sqq.) and those of the Psalm are very striking. The congregation, asserting in general terms the sinfulness of man, confesses thereby its own implication in guilt; in this appears the connecting link between the first and second distichs: sin has occasioned the deep floods of distress; hence the appeal for help cannot be based on the ground of merit; if God has regard only to transgressions, then Israel can only plead guilty and is unworthy of his aid.

(4) This verse has given trouble both in the matter of translation and of explanation. The particle with which it begins, does not, as is frequently the case, introduce a reason for the preceding statement, but rather an antithetic declaration; the counterbalance of forgiving mercy is placed over against the weight of justice in the scales of the divine decision. Hence if this verse is to be connected immediately with v. 3, the particle must be rendered not *for* but *yet*. Similarly in Ps. 22:10 this adversative force appears: here the suffering congregation is represented as pleading with God for deliverance on the grounds of his relation to Israel, and of faith in his power to save which was honored in the past by concessions of the favor desired; but it seems that now God's ear is turned away, the prayer is unanswered, and Israel becomes an object of the ridicule of the foe, who scornfully remarks (22:9): *Let JHVH save them, since he delights in them*, i. e. they claim to be the chosen people, let us see what truth is in their assertion. To this taunt the congregation replies: כי אתה גח' מבטן מבטחי

עַל שְׂדֵי אִמִּי *Yet thou art he that brought me forth from the womb ; thou wert my trust upon the breast of my mother.* But an alternative possibility of translation presents itself : the causal conjunction may be taken as indicating the ellipsis of an idea to be supplied in thought : *though my prayer is unanswered, and my enemies mock me, yet my confidence in JHVH is unshaken, for thou art he that brought me forth, etc.*; cf. also Ps. 44:23 ; 37:20 ; Eccl. 5:6. So in the present passage, in opposition to the thought of v. 3, the statement in Ps. 103:10 may be added : **לֹא כַחֲטָאֵינוּ תַעֲשֶׂה לָנוּ וְלֹא כַעֲוִנֹתֵינוּ תִגְמַל עֲלֵינוּ** *But thou wilt not deal with us according to our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities.*

To the latter part of the verse the principal difficulty attaches. The Masoretic text may be read in a variety of ways : perhaps most in favor has been the reading : **לְמַעַן תִּירָא** *that thou mayest be feared*,* i. e. as Clarisse puts it, that we may be moved to reverence thee. Should God exercise retributive justice, he will be feared and obeyed as a tyrant, lest he inflict injury ; whereas the fact that he deals with mercy provokes pious fear, and wins men to worship him. But if certain punishment has no restraining effect on offenders, then exemption from the penalties of violated statutes will surely not tend to uphold the dignity of the law, nor induce fear of the Law-Giver. Then, too, this is a strange plea in the mouths of offenders ; while the long-suffering JHVH might graciously overlook his people's sins and save them with power for the sake of his honor, it would be nothing short of an insult to the Deity for the congregation to come before him with a confession of guilt and the request for forgiveness that they may be moved to revere him.

Some exegetes have sought by emendation to obtain a more satisfactory text. Grætz thinks the passage quite incomprehensible ; and comparing the Sexta in Origen's *Hexapla* ἐνεκεν τοῦ γνωσθῆναι λόγον σου = **לְמַעַן תִּירָא** *that thy word may be known*, suggests to read **תִּירָא**. Professor P. Haupt, observing Jerome's tradition with regard to the text, i. e. that **תִּירָא** not **תִּירָא** was to be found in the original, conjectured that this word was a rare synonym of **יִרָא** *fear*, and translated : *for the sake of the Religion*.† The sense would then be : “ We in our sins are unworthy of thy grace, but do forgive us for the sake of the true Religion revealed by thee of which we are the only though unworthy representatives.” In honoring the relation between himself and his people on which that religion is founded, JHVH maintains his glory, re-assures the congregation and shames scoffers at the true faith. This is an intelligible and reasonable explanation, but the emendation is unnecessary, ‡ since the same thought may be obtained from the Masoretic text. The word may be read **תִּירָא** *Law*. Grætz's assertion to the contrary notwithstanding, this

* Cf. Wellhausen, *Israelitische u. Juedische Geschichte*, Berlin, 1894, p. 162, note 1.

† HEBRAICA II., Jan. '86, p. 100 n. 5.

‡ Professor Haupt has since abandoned it, as he informed the writer.

gives a most excellent sense. For the *Torah* embodies not only statutes and precepts, but promises and covenants, and while the congregation could not base the petition on an appeal to the fulfillment of ordinances, but must confess guilt, yet it could justly entreat God to vindicate his promise of forgiveness and restoration to favor on condition of repentance and turning unto him. On the one hand punishment is the due recompense of violated law; on the other, the people acknowledge their ill-desert, and in justice to the covenant of mercy God will grant pardon. This thought finds expression frequently in the Old Testament; thus in Deut. 30:1 sqq. closely succeeding the recital of the woes consequent upon disobedience comes the promise of the blessings to be showered upon the repentant; cf. Lev. 26:40 sqq.; Zech. 1:3; 2 Chron. 6:24, 25, 36 sqq. Especially prominent did the covenant relation become in the exilic and post-exilic times, when with earnest longing Israel looked for the day of redemption and restoration.

With thee is forgiveness; cf. Neh. 9:17; אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי סְלִיחוֹת *Thou art a God of pardons*. Tender mercy constitutes quite as important a feature of God's dealing with man as does his justice.*

Luther's beautiful penitential hymn, which closely paraphrases this Psalm, begins with the words: *Aus tiefer Noth schrei ich zu Dir*. He seems to have taken as the principal idea the thought of the second pair of verses, that God will deal in mercy, and therefore makes the Psalm a promulgation of the evangelical doctrine of justification by free grace, and an exhortation to trust in it and not on personal merit. But as connection and analogy show (cf. vs. 4 and 8), the forgiveness of sins implies here especially the removal of the temporal consequences of sin, of the distresses accruing from iniquities. Forgiveness precedes salvation, but the latter is the sign confirming the bestowal of the former. If the congregation continues to suffer, there is no assurance that the petition has been heard. Hence even after the Return, a wonderful pledge of JHVH'S favor, the colonists, depressed by the failure of their hopes, could attribute their misery only to the fact that JHVH'S face was still turned away in anger, and hence they cry: how long ere we shall be restored to favor and prosperity; cf. Ps. 85:6, 7, 8; 126:4.

(5) We have been and are still earnestly expecting a favorable response to the prayer. With a yearning deepened and intensified by past disappointments, Israel † waits still for the boon which God alone can bestow. Events that still live in memory have proved the truth of Jeremiah's words (c. 3:23): *Truly in JHVH our God is the salvation of Israel*. And though the reward of faith is slow to appear, Israel waits for JHVH'S coming in might to save; cf. Isa. 8:17:

* Cf. Dan. 9:9: לֹאֲרָנִי אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַרְחֵמִים וְהַסְלִיחוֹת כִּי מָרַדְנוּ בּוֹ *To the Lord, our God, belong mercies and forgivenesses though we have rebelled against him.*

† Olshausen's idea that the priests here make reply to the congregation is unwarranted by the language.

וְחִכִּיתִי לַיהוָה הַמִּסְתִּיר פָּנָיו מִבֵּית יַעֲקֹב וְקוֹיָתִי לוֹ *And I will wait for JHVH, who hides his face from the house of Jacob, and will hope for him.*

His word, the announcement of pardon, the divine fiat that abolishes the reign of sin and suffering and inaugurates the coming of blessings so long desired; or in other words, the verification of promises, the proof in deeds that God's word never fails. Ewald defines it as "the word of salvation and redemption." As commentators have generally recognized, it is the word of promise that forms the basis of hope, and its accomplishment the object looked for; cf. Ps. 119:25, 28, 42, 74, 41, 49, etc.

(6) By a forceful comparison the poet seeks to depict in a yet more striking way the intensity of expectation and longing which he has emphasized by repetition of the thought in parallel phrases. By some the watchers are supposed to be the priests watching in the temple for the coming of the dawn when they will summon their companions to assist in offering the morning sacrifice * (so Clarisse). Wolfson thinks of the Levites upon whom devolved the duties of watching in the temple and of opening it every morning; cf. 1 Chron. 9:27. Others think of attendants at the bedside of the sick. It seems, however, more reasonable and more in keeping with the idea of intent expectation of a joyful hour to come to consider that the poet had no special class of watchmen in mind, but meant in general those who after a night's vigil (or perhaps the detail of men who keep the morning watch)† await with eager impatience the break of dawn which will bring them relief from the exhausting strain and anxiety imposed on them by their responsible office. The point of comparison is the extremity of desire; as the tired sentinel looks toward the east to catch the first rosy tints that betoken the dawn, so Israel looks to discover the first manifestations of JHVH'S coming.

(7) The repetition of the phrase has given rise to some difficulty, and occasioned the erroneous translations to be found in the Ancient Versions. It is explained by Clarisse as a device to gain the attention of the audience, or as due to the metre, or made for poetic effect (so Rosenm.). Some translators have entirely omitted the significant repetition; thus Bickell: *Ich hoff' auf Gott, auf sein Wort | Harrt meine Seele. | Mehr als auf Fruehrot Waechter, | Harr', Israel,*

* Cf. the Mishnic Tract *Joma*, 3, 1.

† On the night-watches cf. F. Delitzsch, *Assyriologischen Notizen zum Alten Testament*, No. III. in the *Zeitsch. fuer Keilschriftforschung*, II, July, 1885. The New Testament distinguishes four night-watches (cf. Matt. 14:25; Mark 6:48), denoted by *ὄψε*, *μεσονύκτιον*, *ἡλεκτροφωνία* and *πρωί* (Mark 13:35), a division derived from the Romans. In the Old Testament, the night is divided into three watches: *ראש אשמורת* the beginning of the watches, Lam. 2:19; *האשמורת* the middle watch, Judg. 7:19; *אשמורת הבקר* the morning watch, Ex. 14:24. The same division obtained among the Assyro-Babylonians; cf. III R. 52, 57 b; IV R¹ 56, 30^a; II R, 11-13 e, f; *maçartu barâritum*, so named because held when twilight was succeeded by the glory of the stars (cf. Neh. 4:15, in A. V. 4:21); *maçartu qablîtu*=middle watch; *maçartu šadduru* (for *šadurri*)=watch of the breaking of the dawn.

Sein | . So also J. D. Michaelis: * *Meine Begierde sieht nach dem Herrn aus, | mehr als einer, der zur Nachtzeit reiset, auf den Morgen wartet. | Israel hoffe auf Jehova* | ; and so also E. Meier †.

De Wette considers that this is merely a repetition in the spirit of the degree-like rhythm, while Olshausen thinks it has significance only for the external form of the recitation, and Grätz would explain it as an antiphony of the chorus. Hengstenberg attributes it to the earnest longing which loves repetition; and Delitzsch supposes that by this means the poet sought to give the idea of long protracted watching. The Ancient Versions also failed to find the point.

P. Haupt was the first to perceive that "the words with a delicate turn of the figure are used as accosting the congregation," ‡ and belong not in v. 6, where the Masorites by incorrect division of the original text have placed them, but as the hortatory introduction to the address which begins in v. 7. The priest, seizing the last expression used by the congregation, applies it to his auditors as a phrase most apt and fitting, a description clear and terse of Israel's present condition. Your comparison, says he, is just; for indeed you are watching for the morning; in the dark night of sin and sin's consequences you grope, your vision is strained to discover the morning glow of divine grace that will usher in the day of redemption. Darkness and night represent calamity; cf. Deut. 28:29: **והיית ממשש בצהרים כאשר ימשש העור באפלה ולא תצליח את דרכיך** and *thou wilt grope at noon-day as the blind gropes in darkness, and thou wilt not prosper in thy ways*; Ps. 88:7, 8; 107:10; Isa. 42:7. Light, on the contrary, is the symbol of prosperity and happiness; cf. Isa. 60:20: *Thy sun will no more go down, nor will thy moon withdraw*, **כי יהוה יהיה לך לאור עולם ושלמו ימי אבלך**, for *JHVH will be thine everlasting light and the days of thy mourning will be over*; Isa. 58:8; 9:1 (cf. Matt. 4:16); Mal. 3:10. In a similar strain the priest speaks here: *In the evening weeping turned in to pass the night with you, but in the morning glad joy will come* (Ps. 30:6: **בערב ילין בכי ולבקר רנה**). Though that fair dawn be slow to break, yet wait, Israel, for JHVH! Let neither your distress nor your impatience cause you to doubt for one moment God's faithfulness; neither let your sinfulness cause you to think he will not have mercy on you. *For with JHVH is grace, and with him is redemption in abundance*; Ps. 103:11.

(8) And as he redeemed Israel from captivity, so now he, HE (the pronoun is emphatic) will deliver his people from all their iniquities. These sins embrace also the consequences they have entailed; cf. Ps. 35:11: **כי כלו בינון חיי ושנותי באנחה כשל בעוני כחי ועצמי עששו**. *For my life is spent with*

* *Deutsche Uebersetzung des Alten Testaments*, Part VI., 2 ed. Göttingen, 1782, p. 206; but in his notes, p. 276, he gives the correct translation.

† *Die poetischen Buecher des Alten Testaments*, Part II, *Die Psalmen*, Stuttgart, 1850, p. 156.

‡ Cf. *HEBRAICA*, II., pp. 99, 101, 104; and I. M. Casanowicz, *Paronomasia in the Old Testament*, Boston, 1894, p. 83, No. 484.

grief and my years with sighing; by reason of my iniquity my strength fails and my bones waste away; Ps. 40:13; 38:5, 6. The forgiving love that puts away transgressions from the remembrance of the Judge will accomplish the removal of all woe; Isa. 43:25; Ps. 103:3, 4, 5. Let Israel, therefore, wait in calm reliance upon the sure promise of JHVH; cf. Isa. 50:10: מִי בָכֶם יִרְאֵהוּהוּ שְׁמַע בְּקוֹל עֲבָדָיו אֲשֶׁר הֵלֵךְ חֲשֵׁכִים וְאֵין נֶגֶחַ לוֹ יִבְטַח בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה וַיִּשְׁעַן בְּאֱלֹהָיו *Who among you is fearing JHVH, listening to the voice of his servant? He that walks in darkness, without a ray of light—let him trust in the name of JHVH and support himself on his God.*

Very apt seems the conjecture of Paul Haupt that the final verse of Ps. 131, which is there out of place, and has no connection with what precedes, belongs properly to Ps. 130. That Ps. 132 already, in the time of the Chronicler, was placed near 130 is shown by 2 Chron. 6:40–42. Accordingly we may safely assume that Ps. 131 followed 130 at that time, and there is no difficulty in supposing that, even at that early period, the end of Ps. 130 was added to the fragment Ps. 131:1, 2 in order to give it a proper conclusion.* At all events, the fitness of the verse as the closing exhortation of the priest's address is apparent. *Yōu, says he, have waited long, are waiting still; this is the proper attitude, for your light will come. And not only in this present instance do I counsel hope and trust in JHVH, but also in all future cases rely upon him and you will not be disappointed.*

Notes on Ps. 123.

The similarity between the opening of this Psalm and that of Ps. 121 need by no means indicate, as Hengstenberg thought, unity of authorship. As remarked by Cheyne,† the points of similarity with Ps. 120 are much more marked. They are both “distinctively persecution psalms” and contain a “record of deepening misery among malicious neighbors.” Like Ps. 120, this piece seems to refer to the unfriendly disposition of the peoples in Palestine toward the new colony. In the former piece, the Jews arraign these hostile neighbors before the bar of God for slander; in this one, feeling keenly the disgrace of their national calamity that had made them a by-word among the nations, they pray for deliverance from the cruel shafts of contemptuous scorn aimed at them by these unsympathizing persons. Whether the reference is to the general feeling toward the Jews or to some special manifestation of spite, it is difficult to say. But the piece may be placed in the period before the arrival of Nehemiah, when the unfortunate colonists, as we learn from Neh. 1:3, were subject to ridicule and heartless contempt.

(1) After the destruction of the temple, where God manifested himself and where many among the congregation supposed that he actually dwelt, the name

* Cf. *HEBRAICA*, II., p. 105.

† *Origin of the Psalter*, p. 55.

of JHVH as the God of heaven came into particular use, differentiating him from the heathen vanities while answering the slur cast upon his very existence by the question of the heathen*: *Where is your God?* cf. Ps. 115:3, 4; Ezra, 5:11, 12; 6:9; 7:23; Neh. 1:4; 2:4. The proof of JHVH's non-existence or of his weakness was not involved in the ruin of his earthly house; for his throne is in heaven; cf. Ps. 11, 4: **בְּהִיכַל קִדְשׁוֹ יְהוָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם כְּסֵאוֹ** *JHVH is in his holy temple; his throne is in heaven*; Ps. 103:19; 102:20; 2:4.

In the name of the distressed congregation, the poet raises his voice in prayer. Human assistance is lacking and would be of no avail; JHVH is the only saving helper, and he is ready to give aid; cf. Ps. 20:7.

(2) Several explanations are offered: (a) some think that just as servants who, when they suffer violence at the hands of others, have no other recourse than to apply to their master or mistress for defence and the punishment of the offender, so the congregation of Israel, oppressed by powerful enemies, takes refuge in the help of JHVH (Venema, J. D. Michaelis); (b) just as servants are attentive to their masters in expectation of gifts or favors, or even the necessities of life, so Israel looks to the liberal hands of God for kindnesses and blessings (de Wette, Hupf., Kamph., Olsh.); (c) others think of servants undergoing punishment, eagerly watching the hand of their lord for the sign that the castigation shall cease (Rosenm., J. Qamchi, Langer, Hgstb., Bæth);—(d) while yet others have in mind the close attention of slaves to catch the slightest indication of their master's wishes (Hitz., Grætz, Del., Thol.). No one of these explanations seems to yield a satisfactory interpretation of the passage.

It appears that the verse sets forth the relation between JHVH and Israel. In brief, it is an epitome of the Jewish idea of religion. The *tertium comparationis* lies in the obedience, faithfulness and allegiance of the servants to their master. An obedient servant has the right to expect kind, considerate treatment from his lord, and if abused would be justified in leaving his service; cf. Gen. 16:6-9. The tone of the Psalm may appear strange to Christian readers, but it is in keeping with the Jewish conception of religion. JHVH and Israel were parties to a contract, and the terms of agreement were these: protection and prosperity bestowed by God in return for constant, faithful observance of his laws by his people, while, on the other hand, disregard of the divine ordinances entails punishment upon the offenders; cf. Deut. 11:26-28; 28; 29:9-12; 30:1-3. Frequently in the Psalms appeals for help and deliverance are based on the ground of service and obedience; Ps. 86:2: **שְׁמַר נַפְשִׁי כִּי חֲסִיד אֲנִי הַיָּשׁוּעַ עֲבַדְךָ אַתָּה** *Preserve my soul, for I am pious; O thou my God, save thy servant who trusts in thee*; Ps. 31:2; 86:16; 79:10.

* Cf. Cheyne, *Origin of the Psalter*, p. 314.

Israel pleads the terms of the covenant* that JHVH has apparently violated by permitting his faithful servants to suffer under the contempt of their enemies. The people declare their fidelity, humility and utter dependence on God; he is their Master, they his chosen people; † they wait in anxious suspense for the slightest indication of his purpose to help them. Willing to do anything even if they do not get out of their difficulties, yet they hope for and expect deliverance as the reward of their unfaltering allegiance. But it seems now as though JHVH were unmindful of his covenant and careless of their misery.

The hand is the symbol of power and authority; by its gestures the master makes known his will. To lift up the eyes to the master's hand is to be attentive to his commands, to acknowledge his authority; it is the attitude of submission and obedience.

(3) The Masoretic text reads: **כִּי רַב שְׁבַעְנוּ בּוֹ** *For we are but too full of contempt* (Cheyne), i. e., we have been compelled to swallow so many insults that we are filled to repletion with them; cf. Ps. 88:4: **כִּי שְׁבַעָה בְּרָעוֹת נַפְשִׁי** *For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the pit*; Job 9:18; Sam. 3:15. But the reading of the Syriac versions seems preferable here; the change is very slight, and the sense of the passage remains unaltered.

The poet, having shown upon what grounds Israel lays claim to the protection of JHVH, declares that this is a time of distress and need, when JHVH, faithful to his promise, should bring deliverance. *Remember, JHVH, the reproach of thy servants, and, for thy mercies' sake, save us from our enemies, who heap upon us cruel insults; though thou hast made us a by-word among the heathen, yet we have not forgotten thee, nor have we dealt falsely in thy covenant*; cf. Ps. 44:13 sqq.

For the allusions in the passage cf. Neh. 1:3: *And they said to me, the remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province* **בְּרַעָה גְּרִלָּה וְחִרְפָּה** *are in great affliction and reproach*; also Neh. 2:17-19.

(4) The more general expression in v. 3 would fit past or present experiences equally well; but here the defining adjectives give clearer indication of the reference. De Wette justly concludes that the epithets do not suit the Samaritans, for they too were Persian subjects, though in more fortunate circumstances than their Jewish neighbors. Olshausen recognizes that the verse speaks of heathen oppressors. In reference as in form the passage seems to be similar to 120:6 (q. v.). A glance is afforded into the gloomy period of the Exile; overbearing and proud were appropriate epithets to describe the Chaldeans; cf. Isa. 13:11-19: *I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity*; **וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי גֵאוֹן זָרִים** *and I will bring down the pride of the nations*; **וְגֵאוֹת עֲרִיצִים אֲשַׁפִּיל וְהִיתָה בְּכָל צָבִי מַמְלָכוֹת תִּפְאָרֶת גֵּאוֹן כְּשָׂרִים** *and I will bring down the pride of the nations and I will bring down the pride of the nations*.

* Cf. Ps. 44:18-21; 89:40.

† Cf. especially Mal. 1:6.

כמהפכת אלהים את סדם זאת עמרה *I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease and the haughtiness of the fierce I will lay low; and Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the pride of the Chaldeans, will be ruined as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah; cf. Isa. 14:4 sqq.; Jer. 50:29, 31 sqq.; 51:41; Ezek. 31:1-18.*

Long enough did the people suffer shame during the Captivity; but now even in the land of their fathers reproach is heaped upon them.

Notes on Ps. 122.

The title in the Hebrew text has suggested the possibility that David wrote this strong poem. But the idea is at once excluded by the reference to Jerusalem as the former seat of civil government, the capital of David's dynasty, and as a religious center whither the tribes were wont to resort, as well as by the allusion to the temple.

According to the popular view, the Psalm is a pilgrim-song: in it the pilgrims, at length arrived at the gates, pour forth their admiration of the city; or else, as Delitzsch thought, the author, on his way home, recounts the events of his journey from the first summons to go up to Jerusalem. This seems to explain to some extent the language of the opening verses; but does not account for the latter half of the song, from which it would appear that the author is a citizen of Jerusalem and profoundly interested in all that pertains to her welfare.

There is nothing to justify the idea of Wolfson, who thinks that the Israelites in captivity express their intense longing for the temple; on the contrary, everything seems to indicate that the privileges of worship are free to those spoken of in the Psalm, and it is clear that the population of Jerusalem is addressed in v. 6.

The chief features in the situation are these: the people are in Jerusalem; public worship in the temple is now possible, and the city has been rebuilt; but the picture has also a dark side; the earnest prayer for peace and harmony and the exhortation to promote the welfare of the city show that discord and selfishness have been causing trouble. The close correspondence between the situation thus described and that in Jerusalem at the time when Nehemiah was rebuilding the walls is at once evident.* On the one side stood the brave governor with those men who remained true to their obligations as citizens and Jews; on the other were the parties whom the work of reconstruction and reform had displeased, whose schemes to better their private fortunes conflicted with the best

* Hitzig finds a place for the Psalm in the Maccabean period, at the time (141 B. C.) when Simon repaired the walls (cf. 1 Macc. 13:10). Certain of the conditions in the historical situation are thus met; but, as Grætz remarks, the reference in v. 2 seems to point to a time shortly after the Exile.

interests of the city. A special occasion for the Psalm may be found in the distress consequent upon the extortion of interest from the poorer Jews, whom circumstances had compelled to borrow from their richer brethren; the idea is favored by the similarity in tone between the Psalm and the speech of Nehemiah (cf. c. 5). The piece is in any case an address to the people, to the disaffected elements in particular, urging them to promote the public prosperity and promising that personal blessings will thus be secured.

The argument of the poem is developed in a thoroughly artistic and very effective way: mention of the causes for rejoicing in the present state of affairs, coupled with reminiscences of the past glory of the city, naturally leads up to the exhortation and prayer that peace and prosperity may be perpetuated; a fitting climax and powerful conclusion is then reached in the individual resolve of the writer, who swayed by forcible considerations, sets a good example to his fellow-citizens.

(1) The quotation has generally been taken as the resolve or summons of the pilgrims to set out for Jerusalem. But as recognized by Grætz and Hengstenberg, נלך *let us go* does not give this sense, which would be expressed by נעלה *let us go up*. So Hengstenberg supposes that the pilgrims, having arrived at the city, are now stopping at the gates in order that the festive procession may be set in order for the march to the temple; an ingenious idea certainly.

Translated into ordinary English the second hemistich will read: *let us go to church*; cf. Eccl. 4:17: שֹׁמֵר רֵגְלָךְ כְּאִשֶּׁר תֵּלֵךְ אֶל בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים *Restrain thy foot as thou goest to the temple*. The returned exiles rejoice in the restoration of the privileges of public worship; these had been denied them during the Exile; but now the temple had been rebuilt and the services begun afresh; thither the worshippers now go to pray and to make offerings.

(2) Those commentators who take v. 1^b as the summons to go on pilgrimage, see in this verse the arrival at the gates of the city; the poet, following the travelers with his mind's eye, is "already in spirit at Jerusalem" (de Wette); so Cheyne renders: *our feet stand at last within thy gates*.* But with this verse ends everything that might suggest that the present situation has anything to do with a feast-journey; the verses that follow, especially 6-9, show that the occasion is of a different nature.

We are indeed in Jerusalem. The author seeks to impress upon the minds of the people an adequate idea of the magnitude of the blessings which God has conferred upon them, to arouse within them feelings of joy, thankfulness and love, and so to prepare the way for the exhortation to follow. We are again permitted to worship JHVH in his house, for we are indeed back in Jerusalem, the city of

*Olshausen, however, gives the following paraphrase: *einmal betraten wir deine Strassen und Plätze*.

David, whose very stones and dust are dear to us.* How abundant are the causes for thankfulness.

The gates are specially mentioned because they were the centers of public life, the places of business, 2 Kgs. 7:1; also the courts were held there; cf. Amos 5:12; Zech. 8:16; Deut. 25:7; 21:19; Isa. 29:21; there, too, news and gossip were circulated; Ps. 69:13: **יֹשְׁבוֹת שַׁעַר וְנִגְנִינֹת שׁוֹתֵי שֵׁכָר** *They that sit in the gate speak against me, and I am the song of drunkards*; Prov. 31:23, 31; the plural *gates* is used in metonymy of the city itself (cf. Deut. 17:2; 12:15; 14:21, 27, 29) just as the *feet* refer to the persons, so that the notion of literally standing in the gates cannot be maintained.

(3) According to the received Hebrew text the translation is usually given: *Jerusalem that is built up as a city that is compact together*. As to the first hemistich there can be no dispute except concerning the meaning of **בְּנוֹיָהּ**. Some (de Wette, Schultz) take the word in an emphatic sense: *well built*; or else it is said that the principal thought lies in *as a city* (so Grætz), and the verse is supposed to express the astonishment and wonder of a peasant on beholding the great city, with the long rows of houses closely joined together, in striking contrast to the hamlets of the country districts, composed of scattered cottages with wide spaces between them (Chrysostom, Rosenm., de Wette, Thol.). That a city is built need not be said; and hence if such stress is laid here on the fact that Jerusalem now looks as a city should, it can only mean that the place has been rebuilt. In antiquity a city became such in the full sense of the word only when it had been girded with protecting walls.

In the second hemistich the meaning of the words found in the received text is perfectly plain: *where assembled together*; but the subject of the verb is lacking. A subject, however, of the character suggested by the context, is readily obtained from v. 4, where the expression **עֲדוֹת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל** *an ordinance for Israel* is obscure and out of place and should be changed in accordance with the rendering of the Greek translator Symmachus to read **עֲדַת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל** *the congregation of Israel*, and then transferred to this verse.† The sense now becomes perfectly clear: Jerusalem is rebuilt, has arisen from the ruins, so that she now sits in the dignity of a city, the center of a people, where the congregation of Israel assemble for worship as in former years.

The poet advances a step further in his argument: not only are we back in Jerusalem, but the city in which we take pride no longer presents the sad spectacle of heaps of ruins, battered walls and burned gates. The heathen can no longer point the finger of scorn at us, for Jerusalem is rebuilt.

* Cf. Ps. 102:15: **כִּי רָצוּ עַבְדֶּיךָ אֶת אֲבִנֶיהָ וְאֶת עֲפָרָהּ יִחַנּוּ** *For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and her dust they look upon with sadness.*

† Cf. Prof. Haupt's restoration of the text in *HEBRAICA*, II., Jan. 1886, p. 99, note 5.

(4) The phrase **עדות לישראל** variously rendered as: (*according to*) a law, (*custom, statute*) for Israel, or a *testimony for Israel*,—can have no place in this verse. It has been explained as referring to the ordinance in obedience to which the tribes went up to Jerusalem; cf. Ex. 23:17: **שֵׁשׁ פְּעָמִים בַּשָּׁנָה יֵרָאֶה יְהוָה כָּל זָכוֹר אֶל פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ יְהוָה** *Thrice in a year shall all thy males appear before Lord JHVH*: Ex. 34:23; Deut. 16:16.

The tribes of Jah constitute the spiritual Israel, the congregation of JHVH; cf. Deut. 32:9: **כִּי חֶלֶק יְהוָה עָמּוֹ** “*For JHVH's portion is his people;*” Ps. 74:2; Isa. 63:17. The expression contains a reference to the relation between JHVH and Israel; cf. note on 124:1.

The three great annual feasts may perhaps be primarily alluded to here; Deut. 16:16: *Thrice a year shall all thy males appear before thy God in the place he chooses, בחג המצות ובחג השבועות ובחג הסוכות at the feast of unleavened bread, the feast of weeks and feast of booths.* But the point in the verse is of a more general nature; Jerusalem is declared to have been the religious center of the people, the seat of the national religion.

(5) The city was also the seat of government, the civil and political center.

To the king appertained the right to sit in judgment (1 Sam. 8:5; 1 Kgs. 7:7; Isa. 16:5; 32:1; 28:6), though he might also deputize an officer to hear cases (2 Sam. 15:2,3). This power of administering justice stands only as a representative function of the government* which is referred to as a whole by this mention of one of its more important prerogatives.

By these allusions to the glorious past the poet touches those feelings most potent to arouse his auditors to the desired action. He congratulates the people on their present blessings and expresses the gratitude they must have. Their situation in the theater of the actions of bygone years awakens memories of the nation's former greatness and the height of power, splendor and influence Jerusalem attained in the reign of the warrior David and his successors. He thus appeals to national and religious pride.

(6) A most excellent commentary on this verse is contained in the advice of Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon, c. 29:7: **וּדְרִשׁוּ אֶת שְׁלוֹם הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר בָּעָרָה אֵל יְהוָה כִּי בִשְׁלוֹמָהּ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם הַגְּלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם שָׁמָּה וְהִתְפַּלְלוּ בַּעֲרָהּ אֵל יְהוָה** *And seek the peace† of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to JHVH in her behalf; for in her peace you will have peace.*

In this and the following verse the point of the whole Psalm is reached and clearly set forth: an attempt to promote prosperity and unity; an appeal to the citizens to seek with hearty, whole-souled endeavors the welfare of the city. The natural inference is that discord and strife had previously reigned and had produced disastrous results. The exhortation is backed by the strongest arguments

* Hitzig sees here an allusion to the Sanhedrim.

† I. e. identify yourself with the interests of.

that the writer could possibly find. I appeal to you in the name of all you hold pleasant, dear and sacred, unite your hearts and voices in fervent petition for the peace of our city, restored to us from her desolation; they alone who manifest love for thee, O Jerusalem, may expect to be prospered; abundant blessings will reward pursuance of work for the city's interest.

(7) The apostrophe of the city is simply a poetic way of addressing the people; cf. Jer. 4:14; 6:8; 13:27; 15:5.

Some think that by *חיל*, properly *circuit*, the space in front of the walls is meant; so Rosenmüller takes the idea to be that the city will be at peace with the nations, so that there will be no need of an army to protect her; at the same time peace is to reign within, for the *palaces* are put for the whole city, as in Ps. 48:4: *אלהים בארמנותיה נודע למשגב* *God is known in her palaces as a refuge*. But the Psalm is directed to the solution of internal dissensions and the consequent troubles in the city; and the reference in *בחילך* is rather to the city as enclosed within encircling walls, while by the *palaces* the public buildings, temple and houses in general are meant; the two words are put in parallelism, as also in Ps. 48:14: *שיתו לבכם לחילה פסגו ארמנותיה* *Mark you well her walls; consider her palaces*. The verse is, in form and language, parallel to v. 6. The prosperity of the city is conditioned upon the harmonious thought and action of the citizens; peace and prosperity can reign only as co-regents; for the entrance of internecine strife overthrows the state.

(8) In view of all this, says the poet, I will use my power to promote the welfare of the city, that my co-religionists, men endeared to me by social, civil and religious relations, may be benefitted; cf. the parallel portions of Nehemiah's speech to the usurers, c. 5:5, 7, 8, 10.

(9) With this the climax in persuasive argument is reached. Here is brought forward the highest motive which, above all others, should prompt the believing Jew to do what the poet urges. The occasion is one which demands the display, not only of patriotism and fraternal feeling, but of devotion to the true religion. He, then, who refuses to do what the writer so clearly shows to be his duty, proves himself void of fidelity to the city, his fellow-men and his God.

Notes on Ps. 127.

This poem has presented difficulties to some who have sought to interpret it according to the demands of their peculiar theories. With the feast-journeys it has nothing to do. Wolfson finds scanty allusion to the times of Hezekiah, and is obliged to explain it as written "concerning Solomon." Some (de Wette, Hitz., Hupf., Olsh.) consider the piece as altogether general in nature, without special reference to any historical event. The unity of the Song has been doubted, since the connection between the stanzas has been missed. Rosenmüller is disposed to consider it as a fragment of a longer Psalm.

The heading לשלמה has been taken: (1) as indicating the author (so Clarisse, Hgstb., Thol.). In support of this, it is urged that the sentiments of the Psalm are very similar to those in Ecclesiastes and Proverbs, works by tradition ascribed to Solomon, and that the argument of the piece seems to point to the golden age of the kingdom as the period of composition; besides, Solomon bore the title ידירה *beloved*, 2 Sam. 12:25. But the proverb-like form of verse appears elsewhere in the Psalter; e. g. Pss. 1, 112, 128; and by what a time of great national prosperity is indicated in the Psalm, is not clear.—(2) The title may also mean: “for Solomon”; and some think the piece was written by David as a prescription to his son of the manner in which the temple was to be built, or perhaps to give principles of action on the lines of which the affairs of the kingdom were to be administered. Others, again, see in these vigorous verses a rebuke to Solomon as the author of Ecclesiastes, to whose teachings many took exceptions; cf. Eccl. 2:21, 23; 4:6–8; 5:11, 16, with 127:2. The Psalm supplies the answer to the question propounded in Ecclesiastes, and thus gives a good lesson for Solomon.

The superscription (which occurs in the Targum, Aquila, Symmachus and St. Jerome) does not endure the strict examination of textual criticism: it is omitted in the LXX. (except in some MSS.) as well as in Theodoret. It owes its origin to the superficial interpretation of the scribes, to whom mention of the house suggested the temple; this seeming allusion to Solomon was then confirmed by ידירה *his beloved* and שנת *in sleep*, in view of such passages as 2 Sam. 12:25 and 1 Kgs. 3:5–14.

Some commentators seek to find the point of union between the two seemingly unconnected portions of the piece in the general conception which Delitzsch prefixes as the title of the Song, that on God's blessing everything depends (*an Gottes Segen alles gelegen*), the begetting and rearing of children being a special instance of the fact (so Ewald, Hupf., Olsh., Cheyne *et al.*), chosen perhaps because of the great importance attached to the acquisition of sons. In this way the force of the Psalm is obscured in comparatively meaningless generalities, and the adversative element in the second stanza is utterly lost. The connecting link lies rather in the stem בנה, whose double use, of *building in the material sense* and of *building up a family*,* is well known, and it is precisely these two ideas that are brought into juxtaposition in the Psalm. Over against the work of rearing houses, the Psalmist places the rearing of sons; against the provisions of defence for the city is set the idea of protection, to be secured by the multiplication of the inhabitants (v. 5); in antithesis to the notion of restless labor is put the statement that JHVH'S beloved obtain the same results, by the divine blessing, even in sleep. It is true that the words of v. 1, if disconnected from the

*Cf. Prof. Haupt's paper, *Batim lo benuyim*, *Johns Hopkins University Circulars*, July, 1894.

Song, might be taken as referring simply to those who undertake the important works mentioned, without seeking divine assistance and approval (Hengstenberg); but v. 2^c will not admit of this. Quiet confidence in the power of God, attention to the development of the family as the hope of the city, the duty of marriage in the time of youthful vigor,—these are the points of the Song. The opening verse is, to all appearances, general in nature; but at the head of v. 2 stands the indication of special reference in the direct address to the party whose actions incur condemnation. In clear lines the picture is drawn, the original of which in post-exilic times, to which many exegetes assign the poem, it is not difficult to discover. With exact detail is reproduced the description given in Nehemiah's *Memoirs* of his assiduous labor in rebuilding the walls (c. 4:15–17). Moreover, the praise accorded him who rears a large family, seems to imply a corresponding reproach for those who were childless; and this indirect rebuke, as well as the open condemnation in v. 2, appears to be especially directed against Nehemiah himself, who was chiefly responsible for the work, and who was, in all probability, a eunuch. The credit of discovering this reference belongs to Grætz.

The piece originated most likely in the party, composed largely of priests and nobles, who because of their more liberal views in civil and religious matters, and because of their alliances by marriage with the surrounding non-Jewish peoples, were opposed to the orthodox Nehemiah, whose uncompromising exclusivism and determined zeal in carrying out his scheme for the protection of Jerusalem provoked their anger. Many thought all this extraordinary activity misdirected and unnecessary, and considered that the chief good was an increase in the population which, as in the time of Zechariah (c. 2:1–5; 8:4 sq.), was small. This gave occasion to condemn the marriage reform instituted by Ezra, as well as opportunity to taunt the governor with his physical deficiency. Nehemiah appears as a man actuated by religious motives; yet his application of practical means to secure his ends laid him open to the charge that he was not a God-fearing man, since as such he would not have availed himself of worldly instrumentalities (Grætz). But was Nehemiah a eunuch? The words of Isa. 56:3–5 plainly show that there must have been among the congregation in Exile orthodox Jews who, if the law in Deut. 23:1 was enforced, would have been placed under the ban of excommunication as eunuchs. The statement in Dan. 1:3 sqq. that comely children of the Jewish captives were selected to be prepared and instructed under the charge of the chief eunuch for the King's service is probably correct. Eunuchs were a regular appurtenance of royal households in Oriental countries (cf. Gen. 39:1; 1 Kgs. 22:9; 2 Kgs. 9:32; 23:11; Jer. 34:19; Isa. 39:7; Est. 1:10, 12, 15), their especial function being the care of the harem (cf. Est. 2:3, 14, 15), though other matters were also entrusted to them (Jer. 38:7), and their station might be very high, as was that of the Ethiopian treasurer of Queen Candace (Acts 8:27; cf. Gen. 39:1; 2 Kgs. 18:17). So, if Nehemiah had been a

eunuch there would have been nothing strange in granting to him authority as governor in Jerusalem. Indirect testimony showing that he was a eunuch is given in Neh. 2:6, where, speaking of his interview with the king, Nehemiah mentions that the queen was also present. It must be remembered that the queen was jealously guarded from the gaze of men; so that Vashti was acting in a becoming manner and in accord with custom when she refused to obey the command of her drunken lord (Est. 1:10 sqq.). Concubines, to be sure, were allowed to be present at banquets (Dan. 5:2 sq.), but the queen proper, the שֹׁנִי, never.* The eunuchs, by reason of their peculiar connection with the royal household, were brought into closer relation to the king and his family: it was the eunuch's business to wait on the monarch and his women; and in this position Nehemiah was serving.

(1) The house to the Jews in later times suggested the temple, which is more properly designated **בית יהוה** *house of JHVH*, Ps. 122:1, 9; 134:1; 23:6; 27:4; 92:14; or **בית האלהים** *the house of God*, Ps. 42:5; 52:10; 84:11. By metonymy the term also means *family*; Ex. 1:21: *Because the midwives feared God יעש להם בתים* *he made houses for them*,† i. e., built up their families; Deut. 25:9; Ruth 4:11. Not only the combination of *house* and *city*, but also the opposition between the two stanzas of the Psalm shows that the literal sense is intended here, viz., the material building; but besides this, there inheres in the expression the side notion of rearing a family, and, in continuation of this idea, mention of defence for the city suggests protection of the purity and virtue of the home and all the family interests.

The *watchers* are the regular watchmen of the city, whether guards on the walls, or "policemen" patrolling the streets; cf. Cant. 3:3: **מצאני השמרים הסבבים בעיר** *The watchmen that go about the city found me*; Cant. 5:7; Isa. 62:6: **על חומתיך ירושלם הפקדתי שמרים** *I have put watchmen on thy walls, O Jerusalem*; cf. Ps. 130:6. The poet has in mind those who labor as if everything depended on their personal efforts and on physical energy, instead of seeking the help of God as the one all-important means‡ to the accomplishment of the desired end. These pious remarks set forth clearly the principle to be followed, and, however general they may be, contain a sharp allusion to the present affairs.

(2) The poet now quits his proverb-like utterance and passes, with a brief word of personal reference put in the place of emphasis at the beginning, into

* Queen-consorts seem to have been able to invite men of high rank to dine with them and the king (Est. 5); Herodotus (5:18) states that not only the concubines, but also the young wives were accustomed to be present at Persian feasts; Plutarch, however, says concubines but not wives might be present (Symposium I., 1).

† Paul Haupt thinks it not improbable that these words were taken from a different document, and referred originally not to the midwives but to the Israelites. Cf. his paper *Batim lo benuyim*, *Johns Hopkins University Circulars*, July, 1894, p. 109 note.

‡ Cf. Rom., 9:16; 1 Cor. 3:6 sq.

direct address, reiterating his reproof on the basis of a charge more definite and more detailed. V. 2 thus stands not so much in addition to v. 1 as furnishing fresh examples of unblest human activity, but rather in continuation of it, giving exactness and vividness to the picture.

Wolfson, who terms this the Psalm of architecture, explains the verse as a reference to the labors of agriculture, since "who rises so early or works so late as does the tiller of the soil?" Such an interpretation is comparable to that of the Targum, where the passage is explained of robbers who early and late are intent upon their criminal pursuit. Others see here a description of extraordinary exertions to obtain wealth (Hgsth., Hupf., Kamph., Del., Cheyne).

שבת *sit* is here used not of sedentary occupations, i. e., of sitting down to work* (Luther, deWette, Riehm, Olsh., Del.) but in opposition to קום *arise*, not, as de Wette thinks, so much in parallelism as adversative; cf. Ps. 139:2: *Thou, thou knowest my sitting-down and my rising-up*; Deut. 6:7; 11:19; Lam. 3:63. The sense will therefore be not *prolong the sitting up* (Langer, de Wette), but *defer the sitting-down*, leave off work late; שבת in the meaning of *to sit up late* is without examples, though מאחר is used in opposition to משכימי with this connotation in Isa. 5:11: *הוּ מְשַׁכְּמִי בַבֶּקֶר שָׁכַר יִרְדּוּ מֵאַחֲרֵי בִנְשָׁף* *Woe to those who rise early in the morning, who are eager for strong drink, who prolong it into the night, or better, who put off ceasing to drink until late in the evening. Who rise early is contrasted with who sit down late*, the early commencement of work against the tardy seeking of rest. The two phrases conjointly set forth an unusual prolongation of the working-day (Kamph.), a weary round of toil from the first ray of dawn until the fading of evening's twilight.

Bread of toil, i. e., won by toil,† the reward of hard labor; cf. Gen. 3:17: *בֹּעֵת אַפִּיךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם* *In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread*; Ps. 80:6; Prov. 20:17; 31:27; 4:17; Isa. 30:20.

To eat the bread of toil stands in apposition with the two preceding clauses, but not in more immediate connection with the latter (as Hitzig thinks); the phrase expresses the result of all the troubles to which the parties addressed have subjected themselves: uncalled for exertions bring no enjoyment of unusual profit; to no purpose are the troubles taken.

Clarisse takes כֵּן in the sense of *rightly or well*; cf. Num. 36:5: *The tribe of Joseph's sons כֵּן רָבִירִים* *** *כן* *has said well*; Num. 27:7; 2 Kgs. 7:9; *לֶחֶם* *bread* is then supplied as object of *he gives*. But most exegetes correctly explain the word as meaning *the same*, i. e., the result of labor. Cheyne, however, renders it by *surely* and takes שָׁנָא *sleep* as the object: *surely he giveth his beloveth sleep*; the quiet, restful slumber of God's people is put in antithesis to the restless

* Cf. Mal. 3:3.

† Not *bad bread*; cf. Dan. 10:3: *לֶחֶם חֲמֹדֹת* *dainty food*.

activity of those who, anxious to ensure their temporal welfare, deprive themselves of necessary sleep. But, as Hengstenberg observes, the theme here is not *sleep* but *gain*; and the point Cheyne emphasizes is but one of several in the sentence. שֵׁנָה *in sleep* is rather to be considered the accusative of time; while the object of the verb is embraced in כֵּן. *The same*, the object sought which may be won by him who labors incessantly without divine help, only at the expense of toil, is reached by the servants of God without extra exertion, nay, it is even bestowed on them while they sleep; the divine Benefactor grants to the righteous that, with ordinary efforts, in peace and the enjoyment of rest, they may obtain all needful things, whether protection or property.

Two inferences may be drawn from this: (a) that the poet conceives that the party he addresses is working with unwarrantable zeal and energy and in opposition to God's will; (b) he intends to emphasize not only the greater fruitfulness of action approved by God, but even the reasonableness and propriety of resting in quiet confidence that JHVH will procure what is required; no human effort is needed, Omnipotence is the source of help and protection. With the work going forward the writer has no sympathy; it is worldly and indicative of distrust in God.

Nehemiah's piety and orthodoxy cannot be advanced as in any way repugnant to the idea that his work is alluded to here. A very wide difference of opinion as to what was right and proper existed between the parties in Jerusalem, and either side might claim reason and the approval of God for its views. In view of the fact that at the head of those opposed to the governor were nobles, priests and prophets, men of influence in religious affairs, it is in no wise strange that they should employ this means to occasion his downfall and accuse him of irreligion.

(3) *An inheritance from JHVH*; cf. Gen. 48:9: בְּנֵי הָאֵשֶׁר נָתַן לִי אֱלֹהִים *They are my sons whom God has given me*; Gen. 33:5; Prov. 19:4. Barrenness was regarded as a visitation of divine judgment (Gen. 20:18; 16:2; 29:31); the birth of a child, especially of a son, was a mark of the divine favor (Gen. 30:22, 24; 1 Sam. 1:11; 2:21). *Sons* together with the parallel expression *fruit of the womb* may include children of both sexes (Del.); cf. Deut. 7:13; 28:4, 11, 18. But as the context clearly connotes, sons are especially referred to here. The Oriental of ancient times like the Oriental of to-day boasted of the sons he had begotten; daughters were of minor importance.

(4) *Sons of youth*, not young children, but the offspring of young, vigorous parents,* since such as a rule possess greater physical excellence and superior constitutional endowments as compared with children begotten in old age; cf.

* Cf. Eccl. 12:1, which is rendered by Prof. Haupt (vid. his remarks *On the Book of Ecclesiastes* in the *Johns Hopkins University Circulars*, June 1891, p. 116): *Remember thy well* (i. e. the mother of thy children) *in the days of thy vigor*; cf. Prov. 5:15-18.

Gen. 49:3: **עַן וְיִתְרִי שֵׂאת וְיִתְרִי כָחִי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנִי יֵתֶר שְׂאת וְיִתְרִי כָחִי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנִי** *Reuben, thou art my first born, my strength and the beginning of my wealth, the excellence of majesty and the excellence of might*; Gen. 21:7; 44:20; 37:3. But not only this; also these children will be able to help their parents when they have most need of assistance in their declining years.

As arrows, as the bright (Jer. 51:11; Ecc. 10:10), sharp-pointed (Ps. 45:6; 120:4; Isa. 5:28) shafts in the hands of a trained warrior (cf. note on 120:4). Rosenmüller thinks the strength of the children is compared to that of a strong bowman, their uprightness to the straight shafts of the arrows; but the point of comparison lies in the idea of means of defense and offense (Hgstb., Hupf., Del.); special stress should be laid on the notion of efficiency; the experienced warrior will not miss his mark, his keen arrow will penetrate deep; so the vigorous progeny of mature parents will furnish sure and satisfactory protection.

(5) *Happy the man*, he is to be commended and congratulated as one who has done his duty, and who may reasonably expect the due recompense. *Filled his quiver*, i. e. begotten a large family, filled his house with children; thus he is like a bowman with a quiver full of arrows.

The closing verses have generally been taken as containing an allusion to suits at law or cases in general before courts, since the gate was the place where justice was administered (cf. notes on 122:2); the sons are supposed to plead their father's cause (Clar., Hgstb., de Wette *et al.*) against the enemies, i. e. the parties on the other side; cf. Jer. 12:1; Josh. 20:4; 2 Sam. 19:30. **יִבְשׁוּ**, rendered by *put to shame*, is taken to refer to the mortification and disgrace of defeat, or to being intimidated and browbeaten by the opposing parties. The subject of the verb is either the children alone whose efforts will not be frustrated (Rosenm., de Wette, Hitz.), or the father and sons together (Del.). The emendations proposed by Grætz, to read the sing. **יִבֵּשׁ** and to substitute **יִרִיב** for **יִדְבֵּר**, seem unnecessary and unwarranted; Bickell's translation indicates the same substitution of the sing. for the plur.

According to this interpretation there is introduced into the Psalm at its close an entirely new idea for which there is no preparation, though the transition seems natural enough: not only in war, but also in legal strife the sons will furnish protection. If only the general notion, that all things are to be referred to JHVH as the source of blessings, is the chief thought of the Psalm, and no well defined connection exists between the stanzas, then the interpretation may hold. But, as may easily be shown, the Psalm is a unit; and, moreover, the language of v. 5 is capable of another explanation. Upon the meaning of **יִדְבֵּר** the interpretation hinges. By some commentators (Gesenius in his *Thesaurus*, Rosenm., Langer) the verb is rendered by *destroy, kill, or annihilate*. The sense thus obtained agrees with the preceding verse much better than does

the idea of legal processes. Further, passages are at hand to illustrate this meaning. 2 Chron. 22:10: *When Athaliah, mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she arose ותרבר and destroyed all the royal seed of the house of Judah* (cf. the parallel passage in 2 Kgs. 11:1, where *אבר* *destroy* is used); more instructive are the following passages: Ps. 18:48 (cf. 2 Sam. 22:48): *The God that deals vengeance on my behalf וידבר עמים תחתי and drives back the nations under me*, i. e. so that they are subdued under me; Ps. 47:4: *ידבר He drives back the nations under us*. That the verb conveys the idea of *repulsing* or *defeating* these examples clearly show, and the aptness of such meaning here is plain. The force of *in the gate* is now discernible; against the gates besiegers directed their attempts to effect an entrance;* cf. Isa. 22:7; to possess the gate of the enemy was to capture and hold his town; cf. Gen. 22:17; 24:60; the gate was often the scene of fierce and desperate fighting: cf. 2 Sam 11:3; Isa. 28:6.

Over against *ידברו* *drive back* is placed the parallel expression *לא יבשו* *will not be scattered*. The idea of failure, defeat, is implied in the word *בוש*, which connotes the mental side of disaster; there occur passages where its force is but weakly expressed by *be ashamed*, and can only be brought out by a circumlocution, as *disappointed in confidence, foiled in purpose*; cf. Jer. 48:20; 50:2; 46:24; Ps. 44:8; 53:6; 83:18; or else some stronger phrase, as *be routed, scattered in defeat*.† Such is the sense here: the sturdy warriors will not suffer the disgrace of defeat, but will drive back the enemy. The subjects of the verbs are the same in both cases—not the father, but his sons, whose effective warfare in defence of the state reflects honor upon their parent.

It is now possible to discover the relation between the two stanzas, and to solve the problem of their connection. (1) The parts of the Psalm are placed in antithetic correspondence to each other; the former is negative, denunciatory, the latter marked by a tone of positive commendation. The end sought by the workers spoken of in the first stanza is assured in the second, i. e. protection for the city; it is only the means employed to secure that end of which the poet disapproves, and he therefore recommends the means he thinks should be adopted. In the final clause of v. 2 is a brief statement of his proposition, which is elaborated in vs. 3 sqq.; in the development of the family, not in material building, is the hope of the state as well as of the individual. (2) Thus appears the more important connecting link consisting in the double use of the

* In illustration of this passage Haupt quotes an Assyrian proverb: *âlu ša kakkašu lâ dannu, nakru ina pân abullišu ul ippattar*—"the enemy will not be scattered in front of the gate of a city whose weapons are not strong." Cf. *Johns Hopkins University Circulars*, July 1894, p. 109, note **.

† Professor Haupt regards *בֹּשׁ* in this and similar passages as the equivalent of Arabic *bâtha* or *battha* "to scatter;" cf. *Johns Hopkins University Circulars*, July 1894, p. 109, note §.

verb בנה *to build*, (a) in the more ordinary material sense, and (b) in the figurative application of the word to the building up of families;* cf. Gen. 16:2; 30:3; Deut. 25:9; 1 Sam. 2:35; Ruth 4:11; Hos. 9:11.

The purpose of the Psalm is, therefore, to advance the thesis that through JHVH, not through the devices of men, is protection to be attained; in explanation of this, sons, the gift of God, are named as the true defence of the city; and by natural inference from this only that man does his duty who begets a large family, while, on the other hand, he who does not do so, and prevents or hinders others, is working against the best interests of the community and even against God.

The priests and others (in view of the prophecies of Zechariah, cf. 2:1-5; 8:4 sq.; 2:6 sqq.) believed in Jerusalem as the spiritual center of the people with JHVH as a wall of fire to shield the place from harm; so that there was no need for walls of stone. Nehemiah by his worldly ideas and methods offended the prophets; his measures of reform seemed anything but favorable to happy married life. In view of the small families the acquisition of children seemed the chief thing. Hence the language of the Psalm: if the Lord is going to protect us, we need not labor on the walls, we need not watch against the Samaritans—such work is useless. But we do need the building up of our families, and we do not want any foreign eunuch here to interfere with us and defeat our wishes with his ill-timed schemes.

Notes on Ps. 128.

The contents are of a general nature and by themselves do not necessarily convey any special historical† allusion. One purpose of the piece is revealed by the cheerful tone, the bright outlook for the future, *viz*: encouragement. In the promises of temporal prosperity, of children, of the city's welfare, conditioned upon obedience to God, seems to be contained allusion to the state of affairs directly the opposite of that described, when prevalent distress, both public and private, might fitly be explained as due to the sins of the people. Therefore Rosenmüller (comparing Zech.8:) thought the song was written to lift up the depressed spirits of the early colonists‡ by hopes of a brighter future, and to incite the people to work for the common good; the fear of JHVH must displace the transgressions which have occasioned evil. But one fact must not be overlooked, namely, the close accord in idea between this Psalm and the companion piece 127. Each suggests the same remedy, i. e. piety, to procure the welfare of individuals and of the congregation; in each the blessings appointed fall to the same class of

* Cf. Prof. Haupt's paper, *Batim lo benuyim* in the *Johns Hopkins University Circulars*, July 1894, p. 108 sq.

† Olshausen arbitrarily refers the Psalm to the times succeeding the release of Jerusalem from the Syrian dominion.

‡ Hengstenberg also assigns the piece to the earlier period of the Return.

persons, the beloved of God, those who fear him. The former song enforces by contrast and applies in a single matter the thought which the latter amplifies and extends by general application of it to all interests, personal or common, civil or domestic; to the faithful JHVH will not only give sons who will protect them from foes, but he will also assure internal peace and happiness, the increase and perpetuity of the families and the consequent growth and permanence of the city. Yet Ps. 128 is not an imitation of 127 (Rosenm.), nor an idle repetition of the same thoughts. The poet's view is broader, not so much restricted by special considerations of immediate moment such as occupied the writer of 127. The polemical feature so marked in the latter piece is wanting here, and it seems hardly probable that a reproach against Nehemiah is intended (Grætz). On the contrary, the Psalm may have been written by one of the orthodox party* in reply to Ps. 127, urging the citizens to heed God's law and not to listen to the seductive speeches made by the party of the nobles and the prophets.

The Psalm consists of two stanzas (of three verses each), each introduced by the condition upon the fulfillment of which depends the promised prosperity. The first stanza states the more immediate blessings to the individual in business life and the home circle, while the second discloses the more remote results of piety in the advancement of common interests, the perpetuation of the family and the state.

(1) This introductory verse is an epitome of the contents of the Psalm.

According to the Masoretic text the verse should read : *Happy is every one who fears, etc.*; thus the characteristics of the type are first predicated of an indefinite individual; then the poet, passing into direct address, enlivens his discourse by a more personal application of the remarks : every one who fears and obeys JHVH is blessed; if the conditions are fulfilled in thee, thou wilt obtain the consequent results. Olshausen suggests that the change from the third to the second person is connected with a change of voices in the rendition of the Psalm; but this is improbable. The transition is also abrupt and harsh; compare with it the easy passage from the general to the personal in Ps. 119:1-5 sqq. More reasonable and satisfactory is the adjustment proposed by Grætz, who suggests to read **כִּאֲשֶׁרִיךְ** being taken from **כָּל** and the **ל** stricken out), i. e., *blessed art thou*. When it is remembered that the original text was written in the archaic Hebrew character, without spacing between the words or the use of *literæ finales*, it will readily be seen how the scribes may have erred here. So from the start the poet addresses the God-fearing individual, and the attention thus claimed is held to the end.

By the *ways* of the Lord is meant the course of conduct, the manner of living prescribed in the Law. So, in pursuance of the figure, a life of obedience is

* It is also quite possible that the piece was composed by one who sympathized with Ezra and Nehemiah in their effort to introduce the Law in 444.

termed *walking in the straight road*, while any neglect or failure to keep the requirements of the Law is a deviation from the path of moral rectitude, a turning aside to crooked paths; cf. note on 125:5; also Ps. 25:4, 8, 9, 12; Acts 9:2; and the Coran I, 5, 6. *To fear JHVH* is to keep his commandments; cf. Ps. 112:1 : *Happy the man that fears JHVH, ובמצותיו חפץ מאד that delights greatly in his commandments*; Ps. 119:1; 1:1 sqq.

Despite the second person in address, it by no means follows that the writer has in mind a definite individual; the verse is rather addressed to the ideal personality, the most excellent type of man and citizen described (Hgsth.). The latter clause is explanatory of the first, perhaps a more exact statement of the condition required, a restriction purposed to exclude pretenders who, simulating piety and reverence of JHVH, might claim the blessing promised. The condition of the heart toward God must be vouched for by actual conformity to the divine Law. Wolfson sees here an allusion to the mixed worship of the heathen tribes settled in Samaria; cf. 2 Kgs. 17:33 : **את יהוה היו יראים ואת אלהיהם היו עברים** *JHVH they feared, but they served their own Gods in the manner of the nations from whence they had been carried away.*

(2) The poet now passes on to the special illustrations of happiness, and first takes up the matter of personal interests.

The words *the fruit of thy hands* are put first for the sake of emphasis. The phrase means first labor itself, as in Gen. 31:42; then, as here, the outcome of work; cf. Deut. 28:33 : **פרי אדמתך וכל יגיעך יאכל עם אשר לא ידעת** *The fruit of thy land and all thy labors a nation which thou knowest not will enjoy*; Ps. 109:11; 78:46; Ecc. 5:18; 6:2; Job 10:3; Hag. 1:11. **תאכל** *thou wilt enjoy*, as in Isa. 3:10; Jer. 29:5; Job 31:8; Eccl. 5:18; 6:2.

Happy wilt thou be stands here in parallelism to the following, *it will be all right with thee*.* Your good fortune is secured; you will not work and fail to see and enjoy the produce of your toil; or worse still, exhaust yourself by application to business only to see others, your enemies,† perhaps, feasting upon your gains. But from an unfailing source there will flow to you rich blessings of success and increase:‡ cf. Ps. 1:3 : **והיה כעץ שתול על פלגי מים אשר פריו יתן בעתו ועלהו לא יבל וכל אשר יעשה יצליח** *And he will be like a tree planted beside streams of water, which yields its fruit in the proper season and whose leaf does not wither, while whatever he does he carries through to a prosperous issue*; Ps. 119:71, 92.

* The Mishnic Tract Pirqê Aboth, 4:1 gives the following explanation of this passage : **אשריך בעולם הזה וטוב לך לעולם הבא** "Happy art thou in this world and it will be well with thee in the world to come."

† Cf. Deut. 28:30 sqq.; Amos 5:11; Mic. 6:15; Hos. 4:10; Eccl. 6:2; 4:8.

‡ The idea (advanced by Qamchi, Calvin, Venema and Delitzsch) that the reference is to allowing oneself to be nourished by others instead of undertaking self-support, is against analogy and the connection.

There is no need to regard 2^a as the foundation of the statement in 2^b, and hence in order to bring out the sense of the passage, to invert the order of the clauses; 2^b is simply a more emphatic repetition of the more general terms of 2^a.

(3) Not alone in business interests, but also in domestic relations will the God-fearing man be blessed. The reproach of childlessness will not rest upon him, but his wife will be honored because she will be as a fruitful vine in the inner apartments of the house. For two things especially was a woman held in high esteem: *fruitfulness*; she must be the mother of many sons; cf. Gen. 30:23; 1 Sam. 1:6, 11; Ps. 113:9; and *domesticity*; she should, in womanly modesty, in fidelity to her husband, in devotion to the interests of her household, remain within the sacred inclosure of the home;* if she frequents the street her character may be misjudged, and discredit will attach itself to her name and shame be cast upon her husband; cf. Prov. 7:11, 12.

The *vine*, laden with rich clusters, is frequently used as a type of productiveness; cf. Isa. 32:12; Ezek. 19:10; Jer. 2:21; Hos. 14:7; Joel 2:22; Deut. 8:8; and this idea is the *tertium comparationis* here. Tholuck, however, thinks the weakness of the vine, its inability to support itself, the necessity of a stake to which it may cling, is also alluded to. From a similar idea some have referred the words בִּירְכָתִי בֵּיתָךְ (rendered: *on the sides of thy house*) to the vine. But against this are to be urged the connection, the parallel expression (*around thy table* is certainly said of the children), and further, what seems from analogous phrases to be the correct meaning of יִרְכָה here. יִרְכָה means *hind part*,† whence the meaning *side*, in particular the *rear side*; cf. Ex. 26:22, 23:27; 1 Kgs. 6:16; Ezek. 46:19; then the signification of *extreme, innermost recesses* as being at the rear, or the *interior parts* in general, as the *hold* of a ship (Jon. 1:5), or the *depths* of a pit (Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 32:23), the *fastnesses* of a mountain forest (Isa. 37:24; 2 Kgs. 19:23), the *interior* of a cave (1 Sam. 24:4), the *penetralia* of a house (Amos 6:10), and finally *remote regions* (Ezek. 38:6, 15; Ps. 48:3; Jer. 50:41). The word is used here of the women's apartments, which were most secluded from the outside world.

The *olive shoots* are not, as Rosenmüller supposed, the branches that bear the fruit, but young shoots of the olive tree which grow with remarkable rapidity and require no attention (Hengstenberg); cf. Ps. 52:10; 144:12: אֲשֶׁר בְּנִינוּ כְּנֹטְעִים מִגְדָּלִים בְּנְעוּרֵיהֶם *That our sons may be like plants, growing up in their youth*; Gen. 49:22; Jer. 11:16; Hos. 14:7. The point of comparison is vigor together with the notion of beauty; strong, hearty children are promised to the righteous man, such as will not suffer the blight of disease, or be retarded in

* Cf. Titus 2:5; 1 Tim. 5:14; in classical literature: Iliad 6:490 sqq.; Odyssey 1:356 sqq.; 21:355 sqq.

† I. q. Assyrian *arkatu*; cf. Haupt, *Die Sumerischen Familiengesetze*, Leipzig, 1879, p. 15, note 3.

growth by physical weakness ; for in this case there is no iniquity of the parent to be visited on the children (cf. Ex. 20:5 ; 34:7 ; Num. 14:18 ; Deut. 5:9) ; but on account of his righteousness he will be blessed in regard to the fruit of his body (Deut. 28:1-4, 11).

Around thy table, an apt allusion to the home circle ; the few words serve to call up one of the most charming pictures of domestic life. Perhaps there is here some reference to the healthful appetites of growing children, with the side-notion that the father will always be able to make abundant provision for the support and comfort of his family.

(4, 5) As in 127:3 the new stanza is introduced by a hortatory interjection calling attention to what is now to be said ; כֵּן *thus* points to the statements that follow.

Not only will the righteous man be blessed personally, but his piety will have a good effect on his fellow-men ; the good of the whole community will be secured ; *thou wilt see the good of Jerusalem*. From which it follows directly that it is the duty of every citizen to obey the divine law in order to promote the welfare of the state ; cf. Prov. 14:34 : צדקה תרומם גוי וחסר לאמים חטאת *Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach of peoples* ; cf. notes on 122:6-9.

The poet's words are not the expression of his own desires (Rosenm., Hupf.) ; this would make the Psalm very weak. What gives power to the poem is that it is founded on the Law, it is a reminder of the promised rewards to be bestowed according to the attitude of each man and of the community toward the *Torah* (cf. Deut. 38). The language is that of positive assurance, made as it were upon divine authority.

(6) Here again the language abounds with allusions to the feelings and aspirations of an Oriental. It was an honor to be the father of many sons, to secure the perpetuity of the family ; that the family name should be blotted out was an irreparable disgrace ; cf. the imprecation in Ps. 109:13 : יהי אחריתי להכרית ברור אחר ימח שמם *Let his posterity be cut off ; in the next generation let their name be wiped out* ; Ps. 9:5 ; Job 18:17 ; 2 Kgs. 8:19. Secondly, long life was esteemed a blessing, especially when the aged man could point to the evidences of his family's growth, when grandchildren were rising up to spread his name and maintain his honor in Israel ;* cf. Prov. 17:6 : עטרת זקנים בני בנים ותפארת בנים אבותם *The crown of old men are children's children and the glory of sons are their fathers* ; Gen. 45:10 ; 46:7 ; Gen. 50:23 ; Ex. 20:12 ; Ps. 91:16 ; Prov. 3:1,2 ; 4:10 ; 9:11 ; Zech. 8:4.

* Professor Haupt has pointed out that the same idea prevails in the cuneiform inscriptions. Thus Nebuchadnezzar prays : šibâtî lukšud, lušbâ littâtî "let me reach old age, let me be satisfied with progeny" (vid. E. Schrader, *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek*, Band III 2, 29:8 ; 39:50) ; cf. *Johns Hopkins University Circulars*, July, 1894, p. 109.

The effects of individual piety are not to be confined within the narrow sphere of private and domestic life, nor are they transient; spreading their beneficial influence through the community, they ensure the common-weal; and continuing throughout the life of him who by obedience to the Law brought them about, they have promise of permanence through the works of his children.

The liturgical formula: *peace be upon Israel*—forms a fitting conclusion to this Song of cheering promise; whether written by the author or added by a later hand, it may be conceived as expressing the wish that the blessings of peace may be secured to Israel through the means just pointed out. Personal piety and civil prosperity are linked together; those who desire the latter must have the former; then they may plead the promises.

Notes on Ps. 120.

Two elements of the distressing situation referred to in the Psalm stand forth prominently: (a) slanderers are causing injury to the people, and (b) barbarous neighbors manifest a spirit of hostility to peace-seeking Israel. Actual strife is threatened, not in progress, and the position of the people is not that of a victor, but of a sufferer; so that Hitzig is mistaken in assigning the Song to the epoch in the Maccabean period when Jonathan defeated the Arabs and marched to Damascus (cf. 1 Macc. 12:31 sq.). A strong objection to the interpretation of Wolfson has already been noted in the introductory discussion of the Title. His explanation of v. 2 as an allusion to the words of the Assyrian general (2 Kgs. 18:31 sq.), by which he sought to cause a defection among the defenders of Jerusalem, is not inapt; but there is no reason for his violent disruption of the Psalm into two entirely distinct pieces, the one referring to the distress of Judah, the other to the Israelites in captivity; unless indeed it be that he could not otherwise explain v. 5.

Nor is Bæthgen correct in supposing that the enemy was a godless and powerful faction that had been stirring up quarreling and strife in Jerusalem, and was not composed of heathen, since these used in the oppression of Israel other weapons than the tongue. In the post-exilic period, to which he thinks the Psalm belongs, there was a time when non-Jewish peoples in Palestine did employ this very means (i. e. slander) to procure trouble for the colony in Judea, when neighboring tribes did oppose with intrigue and menaces of violence the efforts of the Jews to advance the welfare of Jerusalem; this time is, it seems, the period when the walls were being rebuilt under the direction of Nehemiah. Rosenmüller (following Tiling) correctly supposed that the Samaritans were the enemies here alluded to; but erred in adopting the view of the Chronist (in Ezra 4:24) that the accusations of this people (Ezra 4:6-23) caused an interruption of the work on the temple. Hupfeld's objection that Ezra 4:6 sqq. refers to matters that took place

in the reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes does not invalidate the idea that the Samaritans are meant in the Psalm.

As shown in the Historical Sketch, Nehemiah's work in Jerusalem was not approved by the neighboring peoples in Palestine; reports were in circulation that the Jews intended to revolt and to make Nehemiah their king; these slanders reached the Persian officers in Samaria, who promptly communicated them to the king; it was now a period of anxious suspense in Jerusalem; an attack might be made on the city by the hostile tribes in the neighborhood, and the work of the slanderers might prove disastrous; at this time, it appears, the Psalm was written.

(1) De Wette, on the ground that nothing in the Psalm refers to a favorable response already given to the petitioner, understands the verse as an allusion to the present; so Bickell, who renders: *I cry he will hear me*; also Wolfson, and Hitzig and Bæthgen, who take the following verse as the text of the prayer. But the grammatical form of the verse and the analogy of other prayers combine to confirm the usual explanation, that the poet states his past experience and then, in confident expectation, presents a fresh petition. JHVH has proven himself a God who answers prayer, and trust may therefore be reposed in him. The thought is expressed here very briefly, yet as forcibly as in the long introductions to Pss. 40 and 89; cf. also Pss. 85, 71, 31, 28, 25, 27. The verse may simply allude to the past in general (Hgstb., Hupf. et al.), though the great mercy of recent date—the release from captivity—may be specially meant (Clarisse, Rosenm).

בצרתה corresponds exactly to the expression *in straits*, or to the more familiar phrase, *in a tight place*; the opposite expression is logically, *in a wide place*, i. e., in freedom from the difficulties caused by oppression and danger; cf. Ps. 118:5: **מִן הַמִּצָּר קָרָאתִי יְהוָה עֲנֵנִי בִמְרוּחַ כְּבוֹד** *Out of distress I cried to JHVH; he answered me (and put me) in a wide place*, i. e. set me at liberty; Ps. 18:30; 2 Sam. 22:20; Ps. 31:9.

(2) O JHVH, thou that hearest prayer (Ps. 65:3), as thou didst deliver me in former times, so save me now. The prayer, though a model of brevity, clearly defines the causes of present distress. *Lying lips* and *deceitful tongue* are poetically put for untruthful utterances directed to injure the petitioner; cf. Ps. 109:2; 31:19. The terms aptly describe the means employed to hinder Nehemiah.

(3) The chief difficulty here is the uncertainty as to who or what is the subject. Hebrew usage would permit that **לִשׁוֹן** *tongue*, though feminine, should be construed with the masculine **יָתֵן** *will give*; then the masc. **לָךְ** *to thee* would be taken as meaning the slanderer as the possessor of the tongue (Rosenm., de Wette, Hitz.), and *to give* would have the sense of bringing profit or advantage. This explanation is certainly better than that of Olshausen, who refers **לָךְ** to

JHVH: *What does the deceitful tongue give to thee, and what profit does it bring thee?* and, as there can be no answer to such a question, he considers v. 4 as an expansion of the subject in v. 3. Such an address assumes that God is in alliance with the enemy and has an interest in the deceit; but this idea is at variance with the confidence in God that moves the people to appeal to him. It gives much better sense to take the indefinite masculine subject of יתן as referring back to JHVH, and to consider the verse as an address to the false tongue, לשון being vocative and used poetically of its possessor who is to be thought of in connection with לך.* *To give* would then be taken in the sense of doing injury, inflicting punishment;† cf. Lev. 24:19; Ps. 28:4; and Hos. 9:14, where the words of the prophet have a lively, energetic force: תן להם יהוה מה תתן תן להם רחם משכיל ושדים צמקים. *Give it to them, JHVH! What wilt thou give? Give it to them, a miscarrying womb and dry breasts.* So in the present passage; on the ground of experience the Psalmist expects the desired answer to his prayer, and now turns to the enemy to impress them with the certainty and severity of the divine punishment that they will suffer for their wicked speeches: Punish you he certainly will; he will give it to you; and in what shape will his punishment be and how will he increase the magnitude of the penalty. The same form of expression is to be observed in the familiar formula of the oath; cf. notes on Ps. 131:2.

(4) גבור *mighty one*, does not mean God as Delitzsch thinks, nor yet robber or murderer (Clarisse, Thol.); these commentators miss the force of the word which is here used in a technical sense of a trained warrior; cf. Jer. 50:9: חציו כגבור משכיל לא ישוב ריקם *His arrows will be like those of a trained warrior; none will return empty*; Josh. 8:3; Gen. 6:4; 1 Sam. 2:4; 2 Sam. 16:6; Ps. 127:4. The skillful hand of the archer will not miss its aim, but will speed the deadly shaft straight to the mark. The arrows are sharpened to make them more effective because more piercing; cf. Isa. 5:28.

The broom-plant, *genista monosperma*, not *juniper* as Aquila has it, is a shrub found in the deserts of Arabia. Under a bush of this species Elijah reclined when wearied, in his flight from Jezebel (1 Kgs. 19:4). The root is extremely bitter and would be used for food only in the greatest emergencies; cf. Job 30:4: הקטפים מלוח עלי שיה ושרש רתמים לחםם *Who pluck the salt-plant near the bushes, and the root of the broom-plant is their food*; but the word לחםם may also be rendered *to warm them* (cf. Isa. 47:14), and this gives a better sense, since

* Böttcher (*Exeg. Kritische Aehrenlese zum Alten Testament*, p. 295) thinks the poet conceives of himself as addressed by the Deity with the question: Why this prayer? What evil has the tongue done you? V. 4 would then be the reply. This is possible, as similar dialogues occur elsewhere in the Psalms; e. g. Ps. 32:7, 8, 9, 10. Hitzig also supposes that some person addresses the petitioner, who justifies his prayer by the response in v. 4.

† עשה and נתן are alike used of reward, good or evil, according to merit; cf. Lev. 24:20; Ps. 103:10; Ruth 1:8; Isa. 3:11; Jer. 17:10.

Herodotus III. 94, VII. 78 *Τιβάρηνοι* . . . *Μόσχοι*. Both peoples dwelt in the mountainous regions to the southeast of the Black Sea; the Moschi between the sources of the Phasis and the Cyrus, the Tibareni eastward of the Thermodon, in what was later the kingdom of Pontus in Asia Minor.

Kedar was one of the most important Arabic tribes among the Nabateans. From about 800 B. C. down they are frequently mentioned. They were good bowmen (Isa. 21:16, 17), dwelt in black tents (Cant. 1:5) or open villages (Isa. 42:11; Jer. 49:31), were rich in sheep and camels, in which they carried on trade (Isa. 60:7; Jer. 49:32; Ezek. 27:21). They had their seat in north Arabia, between Arabia Petræa and Babylonia; after the time of Alexander the tribe disappeared, though the name is still to be found in rabbinical works as a designation of the Arabs.

The occurrence here in juxtaposition of these names of peoples who dwelt at such a great distance from each other, and, Meshech in particular, so far from Palestine, has given rise to much difficulty. The Ancient Versions did not understand *משך* *Meshech*, but took it as meaning a great while, a long protracted time, from *משך* to *draw out*, to *prolong*, and explained it of a lengthy stay among the enemy.

The law of *parallelismus membrorum* demands that, as in the second hemistich, so in the first, the name shall be that of a people. Many exegetes, accepting this, take the names in a figurative sense: *people of the sort of Meshech and Kedar*, these standing as examples of savage men, "just as we might speak of Turks or Hottentots" (de Wette). Some * think of the dispersion and suppose that Meshech and Kedar indicate the remote regions in which the Jews were scattered, these places being mentioned as representative ones (Olsh., Cheyne). Similarly Wolfson, who sees in the verse a reference to the captivity of the Ten Tribes, thinks these places denote the distant localities to which the captives were transported. It seems most probable, however, that the verse describes another element in the situation already pictured in v. 2. Meshech and Kedar are mentioned simply as representatives of the foreign elements which formed so large a part of the population of Palestine and Syria in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. It was a motley host of peoples gathered from among the rebellious subjects of the Assyrian conquerors. Tiling's idea, that these two tribes were among those transported to Samaria, appears possible and even probable, though no direct statement has been found to confirm the supposition. It was a custom with the Assyrian kings to remove rebellious peoples from their own countries to other places in the vast empire. Now, it is known from the records of Sargon (*Nimroud-Inscription* l. 11, *Cylinder-Inscrip.*, ll. 15, 23, 24)† that in 715 he conquered a

* So Saadya, Clarisse, Rosenm., Hgstb., Hupf., Del.

† Cf. E. Schrader, *Keilinschriftl. Bibliothek*, II, Berlin, 1890, pp. 38, 42

coalition of nations in the north, among them the Moschi; he then operated against the Arabs in the south and placed some Arab tribes in Samaria. It is not impossible that a similar disposition was made of the Moschi, especially in view of the fact that Samaria seems to have been used by the Assyrian kings as a sort of Botany Bay, since no less than three kings are mentioned as having colonized the place.* In Ezra 4:2 Esarhaddon is said to have brought up to Samaria some of the adversaries of the Jews. One of the most remarkable achievements of this king was his expedition into the heart of Arabia, where he inspired great terror among the desert tribes; so that he perhaps was responsible for the presence of Arabs in Samaria. His successor, the illustrious Aššurbanipal (the Asnapper of Ezra 4:10) may have settled the Kedarenes in the place, for he directed military operations against the tribe about 650; and it is known that he colonized the land of Israel with a number of alien tribes.

The sense of the verse will thus be: it is a grievous misfortune that I have such unsympathetic, uncongenial neighbors, these barbarians from the north and these restless nomads from Arabia.

(6) *Long enough already*; the unfriendly neighbors among whom the people live, suggest to the poet's mind the captivity. Enough and more than enough have I had of such company in Babylon, where, during the weary years of Exile, I was forced to associate with my hereditary foes. The verse is not a key to the character of the neighbors represented by Meshech and Kedar (Hgsth.); that is supplied in v. 7.

The haters of peace are the Chaldeans, who were perhaps not so warlike as the Assyrians, but nevertheless this disposition was more conspicuous in them than in the older Babylonians; the empire they had won by violence had to be maintained by force. Revolts had to be put down and invasions repelled. The expressions found in the prophets justify the above epithet; cf. Isa. 14:4 sqq. 16 sq.; Hab. 1:5 sqq.

(7) *I am peaceful*; literally: *I am peace*; cf. the analogous expression in Ps. 109:4: *In return for my love they assail me*, ואני תפלה and *I am all prayer*. But even if *I speak*, i. e., in the interests of peace; the contents of the speech will naturally be sentiments in accord with the disposition just defined. The full phrase *כי לא שלום ידברו* to *speaking peace* occurs in Ps. 35:20: ועל רגעי ארץ דברי מרמות יחשבון *For they do not speak peace but plan mischiefs against the quiet people of the land*; Zech. 9:10; Ps. 28:3 and 128:8 q. v.

They are for war; they will listen to no overtures for peace. The verse quite aptly describes the anxiety of the Jews to be let alone and the hostile disposition of the alien inhabitants of the land. Inflamed with anger and jealousy,

* Cf. 2 Kgs., 17:24; Ezra 4:2, 9, 10.

these enemies were endeavoring by warlike demonstrations to frighten Nehemiah and the Jews, and paid no heed to conciliatory words.

Notes on Ps. 131.

This Song is but a fragment of a lost whole, yet in itself is complete and intelligible, though the definite evidence of personal or national reference may have been contained in the part that has disappeared. Some commentators see no historical allusion here, while others interpret the words as the pious remarks of one who does not seek to pry into the great and wonderful mysteries of the divine nature.* It has been thought (Hupf., Hitz.) that the expression of the heart's disposition toward God is an unnatural one for the congregation, but, as Nowack observes, why this is so, does not appear. Several exegetes, accepting the superscription as a guide-post, consider that the Psalm was composed by David in reply to the false charges of Saul and his courtiers (so Langer; cf. 1 Sam. 24:10 sqq.; 26:19; 20:31); and Delitzsch thinks the little piece is but an echo of David's response to Michal (2 Sam. 6:21 sq.) when she rebuked him for disgracing himself before the people. Wolfson supposes that Hezekiah was the author; allusion is made to the humility of the king after God's wrath had been aroused against him and the inhabitants of Jerusalem on account of his pride (2 Chron. 32:25 sq.); the king, after the trial imposed on him by God in the matter of the ambassadors sent from Babylon (2 Chron. 32:31; Isa. 39), wrote the Song in order to show "that he had acted in uprightness of heart." Hitzig argues that if the writer thinks it necessary to say that he has not had lofty desires, then an honor is being shown him, or a dignity being conferred, which he has not sought; so Hitzig supposes that Simon Maccabæus here expresses the feelings with which he received the news of the resolution adopted by the popular assembly (1 Macc. 14:25 sqq.) which, on account of his services, appointed him *ἡγούμενος καὶ ἀρχιερεὺς εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*; the date of composition would then fall about Sept. 18th, 141 B. C. Similarly Grætz thinks the note in the Syriac Version deserves notice, i. e. that this Psalm refers to the high-priest Joshua, who oppressed his former colleague Zerubbabel; he might have been charged with haughtiness and arrogance, so he calls God to witness that he is free from pride and does not strive after extraordinary things.

These commentators overlook the fact that the poet speaks, not of what has been received unsought, but of resignation to the loss of what was once a possession (v. 2); this seems to indicate that the spirit in which v. 1 is spoken is not that of a man who deprecates an honor unexpectedly offered, but of one who does not aspire to attain what present circumstances will not permit him to gain; deprived of a blessing formerly enjoyed, so far from attempting to recover it, he has forced himself to be content with his new fortunes.

* Cf. Ps. 145:3, 5; Col. 2:18.

To whatever other historical occasion the language may be applicable, and however aptly it may be taken as recording the experience of an individual soul, its fitness as a description of the situation in Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah is clear. The Jews had lost their national independence and were unable to regain it. Now the necessity for such a solemn asseveration as that in v. 2 can only have been brought about by the very possible liability to damage of some sort accruing from grave charges of discontent and ambition, preferred by such persons, and in such a quarter, that it seemed a denial must be made, or mischief would result. So it would appear, in reply to the accusations made and to the rumors current among the neighboring tribes* (cf. Neh. 3:34; 6:5 sqq.), the Jews say they are not inclined to revolt, they have no great schemes in their minds looking to the re-establishment of their independence,† but, on the contrary, are willing to take a solemn oath that they will remain in peaceful subjection to the will of God, under Persian rule.

In form the fragment (with the exception of v. 3, which appears to be a later addition) consists of two verses in antithetic parallelism, the former stating negatively facts, the positive side of which is set forth in the latter. A most striking feature is the strength of expression.

(1) According to the interpretation usually given, the two parallel phrases, with which the Psalm begins, convey the notion of spiritual pride exhibiting itself in haughty demeanor and contemptuous looks; cf. Prov. 30:3: **דור מה רמו עיניו ועפעפיו ינשא** *There is a generation—how lofty are their eyes, and their eyelashes are lifted up!* But this idea of superciliousness and assumed authority is not in close connection with the thought in the second hemistich, since the logical complement would be: *nor have I despised and oppressed the humble and lowly* (cf. Ps. 10:2). As Hengstenberg says, pride, in particular the sort accompanied by a contemptuous depreciation of other men, is often the result of personal success; there is, however, no suggestion of any such good fortune here; on the contrary, the speaker affirms that he has actually suffered loss (v. 2).

The connotation of lofty looks is pride; cf. Ps. 101:5: **גבה עינים ורחב לבב אתו לא אוכל** *A proud look and a haughty heart—I cannot endure it*; Isa. 2:11, 17; Prov. 6:17; Ps. 18:28; and also *to be high*, said of the heart, means to be haughty; cf. Prov. 16:18: **לפני שבר גאון ולפני כשלון גבה רוח** *Before destruction there is pride, and a haughty spirit precedes a fall*; Prov. 18:12; 2 Chron. 32:26. But the sort of pride meant here is readily determined when the relation of the two hemistichs is considered; the poet describes first

* So Rosenmüller.

† The ideal of the post-exilic scribes was to abandon all political schemes and to devote themselves solely to carrying out the precepts of the Law. Cf. W. R. Smith, *Old Test. in the Jewish Church*, 1892, p. 45.

his disposition, then his behavior, first habits of thought, then habits of action; *out of the heart*, as the poet recognizes, *are the issues of life* (Prov. 4:23), and so from the feelings disclaimed originate impulses to pursue the course of action avoided. If, then, the declaration is made that certain feelings are absent from the heart, coupled with confirmatory evidence of this fact in that no attempt is made to accomplish impossible schemes, it involves simply a process of reasoning to discover the nature of the feelings in question. No such special meaning as pride of birth or station (Del., Langer) is justified by the context. The principal thought of the verse is the dethronement of arrogant ambition which, refusing to be moderated by reason and common sense, will not be restrained within the bounds of possibility, but trains the eye to look for the realization of unfounded expectations. It is the self-sufficient pride of ambition that causes a person to venture indiscreetly beyond his depth;* cf. Isa. 37:23 sqq. Those whose condition is described here would not be guilty of such a mistake. Their attention is not directed to secure the consummation of aspiring hopes such that men, who consider wisely the present state of affairs, would stamp as arrogant folly.

Grætz thinks גרלות here means *honor* or *dignity*, and that the allusion is to some position of power and authority; this seems an unwarranted restriction of the application of the word, which extends over much the same ground as the following phrase, and has the same import as in Jer. 45:5: ואתה תבקש לך גרלות אל תבקש And if thou wouldst seek for thyself great things—do not seek them, i. e. the accomplishment of large plans with a view to gaining important results; Jer. 33:3. נפלאות means not *too wonderful* (Hgsth., Ewald) which would give the idea of something beyond comprehension; cf. Job 42:3: Wherefore I have uttered what I did not understand, נפלאות ממני ולא אדע things too hard for me to know; but rather *too difficult*, unattainable things (Del., Bickell, et al.); cf. Gen. 18:4: היפלא מיהוה דבר Is anything too hard for God? Deut. 30:11; 17:8; Zech. 8:6.

The thought of the verse is therefore: ambition does not induce my mind to devise great schemes, since this would be the extreme of folly, for I am incapable of accomplishing them.

(2) The author now outlines the positive side of the character he is describing. The form of the statement first demands attention. Some translators (LXX., Vulgate and Luther) have misunderstood the verse as containing within itself both protasis and apodosis of a conditional clause. But, as most commentators have recognized, the formula is that of the oath; cf. 1 Sam. 3:17: כה יעשה לך אלהים וכה יוסף אם תחבר ממני דבר May God do so to thee and more also if thou concealest anything from me; 1 Sam. 20:13; 2 Kgs. 6:31; 1 Sam.

* Cf. Shakspeare's *King Henry VIII.*, Act III., Sc. 2, in Wolsey's speech: "I have ventured, like little wanton boys that swim on bladders," etc.

14:44; 2 Sam. 3:9, 35; 1 Kgs. 2:23; Ruth 1:17. Though the imprecation itself, the unpleasant part of the oath, is omitted, its presence is implied, and the expression is still felt, not simply as an emphatic declaration, but as an actual oath; cf. the following passages where the verb *swear* is used: Ps. 95:10, 11: *For forty years I loathed the generation, and I said: a people of an erring heart are they and they know not my ways; אִשֶּׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי בְּאִפִּי אִם יִבְאוּן אֵל מְנוּחָתִי* of whom I swore in my wrath: If they enter into my rest—; Deut. 1:34 sq.; Isa. 14:24; Ps. 132:2 sqq. The aposiopesis is to be noted in the midst of an address where no external sign of the presence of an oath can be seen; cf. Isa. 22:14: *And JHVH Sebaoth made a revelation to me (saying): אִם יִכְפַּר הָעוֹן הַזֶּה לָכֶם עַד תָּמוּתוּן* if this iniquity be purged from you till you die—; Job 1:11; 2:5; Jer. 22:6; Job 17:2; Ps. 27:13. The nature of the imprecations implied may be inferred from the context; so here: If I have not quieted my soul, may God, to whom I appeal, condemn and punish me!

Calmed, literally *made even* or *smooth*, as the waters of a troubled sea subside: in Isa. 28:25, the word is used of preparing the soil for the seed.

The mind is not puffed up with ambitious desires, for all the great longings after what is impossible have been suppressed and the turbulent appetites brought into subjection; so that the spirit now rests in quiet like a weaned child in the mother's arms. Some exegetes, disregarding the idea conveyed by *weaned*, think the reference here is to dependence: *as an infant helplessly depends on the mother, so I on the Lord*; others explain the words as meaning: *as a child is quiet when clinging to the parent, so I, clinging to JHVH, rest tranquilly*. Hengstenberg thinks the point of comparison is the modest humility of the child; cf. Matt. 18:34; the Psalmist is content to wait until God is pleased to give what he wants; similarly Coccejus and Venema gave explanation. But (as noticed by Clarisse and Rosenm.) this interpretation contradicts the meaning of the terms employed. There is no reason to take גִּמְלָה in the sense of an infant still possessed of a suckling's appetite; יוֹנֵק *suckling* must then have been used; but the word means simply an actually weaned child; cf. Isa. 28:9: *Whom will he teach knowledge, and whom will he cause to understand the message? גִּמְלֵי מִחֶלֶב עֵתִיקִי מִשְׁרִים* Those weaned from milk and removed from the breasts; Isa. 11:2; 1 Sam. 1:23; Hos. 1:8. There is no suggestion that emphasis is to be laid on the gradual process of weaning; but rather on the fact that the work is completed. The child may lie upon the very bosom whence it was wont to derive nourishment, but it no longer restlessly craves the breast; reconciled to the loss, it has become content with present arrangements. Hence the *tertium comparationis* is: *reconciliation to the deprivation of something of value and importance and contentment with the present lot*; there is no prospect of recovering what has been lost, nor is there any wish for it. Exegetes who refer the Psalm to David, Hezekiah, Joshua or Simon the Macca-

bee, have missed this point; but the whole piece seems to obtain most fitting explanation when regarded as expressing the feelings of the sensible portion of the congregation in the days of Nehemiah. Jewish national independence was ruined when Jerusalem fell in 586; the national spirit, kept alive by faith during the Exile, was roused to new vigor by the cheering influence of the Return, and many expected to see Judah take her place among the nations. But as years passed without bringing the great revolution expected, it became patent to thinking minds that the Jews could maintain a collective existence only as a religious body, not as an independent civil organization; all idea of the latter must be given up. The occasion of replying to charges made by enemies of the congregation, gave opportunity for the public declaration of this fact. Hence it is said: We are not guilty of arrogant ambition, nor, unmindful of our feeble condition, have we any purpose to pit our weakness against the power of the Persian Empire; but we have schooled ourselves to accept our present circumstances as the inevitable and now rest contented.

The Jews do not want anything from the Persian government, but are content to remain under the protection of the mother city, from which they went out as a colony.

As a weaned child is my soul within me. Some regard this repetition as in accord with the degree-like construction (Hupf.). Grætz, following the Greek versions, would emend to read: "בֵּן גִּמְלָה וְגוֹ", when the clause would stand as the apodosis of the oath formula: *If I have not quieted . . . , so may it be repaid upon my soul.* Others (Del., Ewald, Clarisse, Rosenm, Hupf.) think the words *as a weaned child upon the mother* are to be connected with this clause, thus: *As a weaned child on its mother, so the weaned one in me, my soul*; but if so, then the text should read בֵּן גִּמְלָה. Delitzsch translates: *Like a weaned child with its mother, Like the weaned child is my soul with me*, i. e. "as a weaned child is his soul in relation to his Ego"; and he thinks it is an example of the "ladder-like construction." But the clause actually spoils the literary form of the piece, which is otherwise written entirely in accord with the scheme of the *Kinah-Strophe*.* The words seem to be a marginal gloss appended to indicate the *tertium comparationis*; Bickell, in his metrical rendering of the Psalm, very properly omits them.

V. 3 in the Masoretic text, has no connection with the argument of the Psalm, though it has been explained as an address of commendation and encouragement to the congregation from the high-priest, or a priestly choir (Olsh., Grætz). In any case, it presupposes that vv. 1:2 voice the feelings of the people, not of an individual; otherwise it is a "strange addition" (de Wette). Those who regard the piece as originally composed with reference to some person's personal experi-

* Cf. C. Budde's Article in the *Zeitschr. für Alttestamentl. Wissenschaft*, II, p. 42.

ences, think that by means of this apostrophe it was adapted to the uses of the community (Clarisse). The supposition seems quite probable, that the formula was added when the Song found a place in the temple hymn-book; and it appears to have been taken from Ps. 130, which stood close at hand; cf. Ps. 130:8, notes.

Notes on Ps. 129.

Ps. 129 is first a hymn of thanksgiving for the deliverance of Israel from oppressors (v. 1 sqq.), then a prayer that the divine Guardian may continue his watch-care over the chosen people, while the ungodly heathen are swept from the face of the earth. The present situation is one of comparative freedom, but, it appears, the people are still exposed to the assaults of enemies.

That the Psalm is of post-exilic origin is generally admitted. Hitzig and Olshausen think that the contents point to Maccabean times, and the former fixes the date as shortly after the capture of the castle in Jerusalem by Simon in May, 142 B. C. (cf. 1 Macc. 13:51 sqq.), i. e. in the harvest season; hence the figure in vs. 7, 8. But this reference is by no means necessary; the close parallelism with Ps. 124, which, as has been shown, is best explained as a product of the Return, argues an origin in the same period. Both Psalms ascribe Israel's salvation to divine interference, and in both figures of captivity are employed to picture the state from which the people have escaped. The language of Ps. 129 is of more general application than that of 124; for while the latter treats of a single epoch of distress from the gloomy beginning to the happy end, Ps. 129 compresses within the brief space of four verses an epitome of the national history from the dawn in the Egyptian house of bondage, through centuries of persecution, through national disasters and the night of captivity, to the morning of freedom, when, with bright anticipations, the congregation faces a future fair with promise.

One purpose of the Song, i. e. encouragement, is contained in the idea to be supplied as a connecting link between the two stanzas, viz.: JHVH will direct and care for the fortunes of Israel in the future as he has done in the past. Enemies of the religion of Israel, who may do harm, are at hand; upon them, as upon all adversaries of Judaism, the curse of God is invoked.

Thus it appears that the historical situation may be found in the era of the Return. The allusions to enemies indicate that it was composed later than Ps. 124; not, however, in the gloomy period succeeding Ezra's unsuccessful attempt to reorganize the community on the basis of the Law, but when public confidence had been restored by the successes of Nehemiah.

(1, 2) The *terminus a quo* of the period alluded to is rightly declared to be the captivity in Egypt. Israel was conceived of as a virgin to whom youth might be ascribed; cf. Ezek. 16:23; Jer. 18:13; 31:4, 18; or, as a boy, JHVH's son; Hos. 11:1: **כִּי נַעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶהְבֵּהוּ וּמִמְצָרִים קָרָאתִי לְבָנִי** *When Israel was a*

child I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt ; cf. Exod. 4:22 ; Jer. 31:20 ; similarly in other places the sojourn in Egypt is definitely referred to as the period of Israel's youth ; Ezek. 23:3 ; 23:19 ; Jer. 2:2 ; 3:25 ; 22:21 ; 32:30 ; Isa. 46:4 ; Hos. 2:17.

The formula of address is an exhortation to join heartily in the thanksgiving for the mercies experienced. The repetition (in v. 2) emphasizes the idea of violent, unintermitted persecutions which for centuries had been inflicted on Israel. In antithesis to the recital of woes, the adversative particle *nevertheless* introduces the glad thought of endurance through all the storm of affliction ; the repeated attempts of the oppressors to procure Israel's ruin have failed to gain a permanent success ; the people has not been utterly subdued.

(3) The meaning is disputed. Many incline to take the words figuratively as referring to severe, merciless scourging ; the *furrows* are the long stripes or welts on the back of the virgin (i. e. Israel) now in a state of servitude ;* and the phrase *made long their furrows* is supposed to denote oft-repeated or prolonged application of the whip as well as the length of the wounds ; so in Egypt the taskmasters compelled the Hebrews to work under the lash ; cf. Exod. 1:13, 14 ; 3:7 etc. But parallel passages to prove this view correct are wanting ; those quoted in support of it do not refer to scourging ; e. g. Am. 1:3 : *Thus saith JHVH, for three transgressions of Damascus and for four, I will not restore it, על רושם בחרצות הברזל את הגלעד* because they have threshed Gilead with sharp instruments of iron ; Hab. 3:12 ; Isa. 41:15 ; Jer. 51:33 ; Mic. 4:13 ; 2 Kgs. 13:7. The allusion in these passages is to subjugation, and even annihilation, by the unsparing iron hand of military power ; and so it is here. The picture is that of the nation prostrate in defeat, exposed to the merciless treatment of the foe ; cf. Isa. 51:23 : *ושמתי ביד מוֹגֵן אשר אמרו לנפשך שחי ונעברה ותשמי כארץ גוך וכחין לעברים* But I will put it (i. e., the cup of my fury) in the hand of them that afflict thee, who said to thy soul : bow down that we may pass over ; and thou didst place thy body as the ground and as the street to those who went over. Israel was made the highway over which the enemy passed.

In the light of the history of Western Asia, the passage becomes clear and simple. The battle-ground in the struggle between the two great rival powers of the Nile and the Euphrates lay in the intermediate provinces of Syria and Palestine.† The acquisition of this territory by either was a menace to the existence of the other ; to Egypt it might be a bulwark against her Eastern foe, to Assyria the gateway to the treasures in the rich cities of the Nile valley. Through this

* Agellius (quoted by Rosenm.) supposed that the words refer to smiths who lengthen out the metal by hammering it ; so the Egyptians cut the Hebrews with scourges as though they were pounding on iron.

† Cf. the paper of Dr. Cyrus Adler, *Ancient Eastern Politics in Johns Hopkins University Circulars*, July 1894, pp. 116sq.

district passed the great caravan routes connecting the extremes of the Oriental World, and which, leading to the seaport-towns on the Mediterranean coast, were the arteries through which flowed trade and prosperity to the nation whose military power was sufficient to divert the benefits to itself. Hence, for commercial reasons as well as strategic purposes, the possession of this territory was a matter of prime importance; and so the contest was waged over it again and again. The smaller nationalities that had their seats here might for a time, under the protection of defences provided by nature, maintain their independence; but sooner or later, the alternative presented itself of choosing either Egypt or Assyria as lord. In this situation was Israel; submission to the invading armies was always either voluntary or forced; and, not content with free passage, the enemy subjugated the country in order to secure it; Palestine was considered as a field that might be cultivated for their own benefit without regard to the fate of the nation of Israel; just as a plough breaks up the soil that it may be ready for the ploughman's use, so the oppressors broke up the independence of Judah that it might no longer remain as an obstacle to hinder the realization of their desires. The figure might even have literal application and refer to the utter destruction of cities; cf. Jer. 26:18: *Micha the Morashtite was prophesying in the days of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, and he spoke to all the people of Judah, saying: כה אמר יהוה צבאות ציון שדה תחרש וירושלים עיים תהיה והר הבית יער* thus saith JHVH Sebaoth, Zion will be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem become heaps and the mountain of the temple a desolate hill; * Mic. 3:12. It seems better, however, to take the words as alluding to the frequent invasions, the expeditions and counter expeditions, all of which were ruinous to Palestine. *They made long their furrows*; traces of the mischief done could be seen for centuries.

(4) By some the figure is thought to refer to hostile dominion; the *cords* are chains or fetters, emblems of the subject's relation to the dominant power (Hgsth.); cf. Ps. 2:3: *ננתקה את מוסרותינו ונשליכה ממנו עבותינו* *Let us break asunder their fetters, and cast off from us their cords.* Others think of slavery, a condition of servitude and captivity (de Wette, Hupf., Olsh.). It seems much better, however, to consider the expression as an element of the figure drawn from agriculture which begins in v. 3; the *cords* are those attached to the yoke, i. e. the reins or traces; cf. Job. 39:10: *התקשר רים בתלם עבתו* *Canst thou bind the wild bull with the cord in the furrow?* There is no point in Hupfeld's objection that the people represent not the oxen drawing the plough, but the field; the country is especially meant in v. 3; here it is the people themselves. The

* Cf. also the common expression in the Assyrian historical inscriptions, used when speaking of the demolition of cities: *ana tili u Karmi utêr*, "I turned it into a heap of ruins and cultivated ground." Cf. the Prism-Inscription of Tiglath Pileser I (c. 1110 B. C.), col. III. 1. 84; vid. W. Lotz, *Die Inschriften Tiglath-Pileser's I*, Leipzig 1880, pp. 32, 138.

country suffered because the inhabitants had to serve the pleasure of their enemies; with the removal of the foreign yoke the cruel ploughing ceases. The *lot of the righteous* (cf. 125:3) was, to the foe, a field that might be tilled for his benefit; the people kept in the bondage of tribute were as the creatures that draw the plough, merely beasts of burden; cf. Lev. 26:13: *I am JHVH, your God, who brought you forth from the land of Egypt that you should not be servants to them, and I brake the bands of your yoke and made you walk erect*; Ezek. 34:27; Isa. 9:3; 10:27; 14:25; 47:6; Jer. 28:14; 30:8.

JHVH, the covenant-keeping guardian of his people's interests, has cut in twain the cords and Israel has experienced relief. With this declaration the narrative reaches its *terminus ad quem* in the present; obviously, the story of release has reference to an important event yet fresh in the minds of the people. Israel's enemies have inflicted much distress, but have not wrought a permanent disaster; for now God has broken the yoke of Babylonian bondage, and the Jews are no longer beasts of burden, but men, breathing the sweet air of liberty in the land of their fathers.

(5) From the contemplation of the wonderful past, the poet turns to the future. Inspired with hope and confidence, he prays that God may continue to work for Israel by removing all who manifest hostility to the true faith. There underlies the words of this stanza an implied exhortation to confidence: learn the lesson taught by history that in JHVH is salvation; therefore let us hope he will destroy all who are inimical to us.

The verbs stand first for the sake of emphasis as in Ps. 6:11: **יִבְשׁוּ וִיבָהֲלוּ כָּאֵרֶץ כָּל אֹיְבֵיהֶם** *Let them be discomfited and utterly ruined, all my enemies. The haters of Zion* are all the adversaries of the Jewish religion (Langer, Del.), for an attack on the church was an attack on the people. From this time on much of the trouble and persecution inflicted on the Jews was in consequence of their religious belief and practices. In particular their neighbors gave proof of annoyance at the policy of exclusivism by bringing into play every means to subvert the work of reconstructing the state. The phrase here embraces all enemies, those now existing and those yet to come.

(6) The roofs of many houses in the Orient were constructed in the following way: pieces of timber were laid across from wall to wall to serve as rafters; upon these were placed smaller sticks and brush and over the whole was spread thick mud or clay, which was rolled or pressed to make it firm. Upon the surface of this structure, moistened by the rain, blades of grass would quickly appear, but the fierce heat of the sun soon dried up the mud and, lacking root and moisture, the grass wilted and died.

The only difficulty which the verse presents attaches to the verb in the second hemistich. **שָׁלַח** is employed elsewhere in the Old Testament only

in a transitive sense; of drawing a sword, 1 Sam. 17:51; Judg. 8:10; of pulling a weapon from a wound, Judg. 3:22; Job 20:25; of removing a shoe, Ruth 4:7. Hence the LXX., Vulgate, Theodotion and some modern exegetes (Clarisse, de Wette, Hgstb., Olsh.) have conceived that the allusion is to the plucking up of the grass, either in weeding, or in gathering it for provender. But this grass is not usually weeded out, nor can it produce hay; so that the rendering *pluck* is pointless. The *tertium comparationis* here, as in so many other passages where the figure of withering grass is employed, is transitoriness; cf. Isa. 40:6-8; Pss. 37:2; 103:15, 16; 90:5; and especially Isa. 37:26, 27 (=2 Kgs. 19:25, 26): *Hast thou not heard how long ago I did it, and of ancient times I performed it? Now I have brought it about that thou shouldest be for laying waste fortified cities so that they become ruined heaps; their inhabitants were powerless, dismayed and discomfited, they became as the grass of the field and the green herb, as the grass of the house tops, and a blasting (of vegetation) before it has grown up.* The idea of a premature end underlies these comparisons, and the same is true of v. 6. So that the ancient Versions (Targum, Aquila, Symmachus) which several modern exegetes (Hitz., Hupf., Kamph., Cheyne) have sensibly followed, appear to be justified in taking the verb in an intransitive sense, with *grass* as subject. In its original signification שָׁחַח = *to unsheath*; so here, intransitively, it is very properly said of the grass, *to unsheath itself*, to come forth from its bracteal covering. This then gives most excellent sense: may they be like the grass on the flat clay-roofs which, suddenly appearing after a shower, as suddenly withers under the fierce heat of the sun before it has time to develop, to put forth stalk, or to produce blossoms; there is no deep root,* nor can a supply of moisture be obtained from the baked mud, hence the destruction of the plant is inevitable; it leaves no seed, hence the reproduction of its kind is cut off. May such be the fate of Israel's enemies; destitute of real foundation, having no access to sources whence sustenance may be derived, exposed to the constant assault of pitiless forces of evil, may their ruin be complete, may they utterly vanish from the face of the earth.

(7) As the sun-scorched blades of grass are useless, yielding naught that the harvesters may gather, so may nations hostile to Zion play no part in the history of the world, may they leave nothing to posterity,† may no people reap any fruit from them.

(8) According to the traditional explanation this verse represents the exchange of greetings between the reapers and the passers-by; some, however, explain the second hemistich as a parallel repetition of the first,‡ or else a circumlocution expressing the same thought (Qamchi, de Wette, Kamph., Olsh.). The

* Cf. Matt. 13:5, 6; Mark 4:6; Luke 8:6.

† Thus Israel left religion as a heritage to the world, Greece art, Rome law.

‡ Cf. Wellhausen, *Israelitische u. Juedische Geschichte*, p. 164.

idea is suggested by the allusions to the harvest field in vs. 6, 7, and a superficial likeness between the phrases here and those in Ruth 2:4: *And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the reapers: יהוה עמכם ויאמרו לו יברכך יהוה JHVH be with you; and they said to him: may JHVH bless thee.* But the formulæ are not the same; and further, the fact must not be overlooked that this strophe is spoken with reference to the hostile peoples, and that the words in v. 8 are not addressed to the reapers, but describe the disposition and feelings of others toward the enemies of Zion, who represent not the harvesters but the worthless withered grass. The passers-by, i. e. other nations, and future generations of men, are the reapers, those who would naturally expect to receive from sister-peoples, from their predecessors on the stage of national existence, some fruit of experience or knowledge, some heritage of literature, institutions or civilization. Such an inheritance, the poet prays, may Zion's enemies not bequeath to the world; may sudden destruction cut off the possibility of producing anything that will be of use to mankind. The words in v. 8 must refer to something that takes place after the fall of the nations; they express the sentiments of those who contemplate the swift ruin and utter annihilation of those who dared to oppose the Jews; cf. Jer. 18:16: *לשום ארצם לשמה שריקת עולם כל עובר עליה ישם ויניד בראשו To make their land desolation, a perpetual hissing; every one that passes by it will be amazed, and will wag his head;* Jer. 19:8; Zeph. 2:15; Lam. 1:12; 2:15. Instead of words of sympathy and regret, imprecations will fall from the lips of those who gaze upon the ruin of the once proud states; there will be no such kindly farewell as *requiescat in pace*, but the relegation of the name to infamy and reproach. These nations will not have a *nomen perenne per annos*; no one will have grateful remembrance of them. Unblest, unwept, driven suddenly from the stage of history, leaving nothing behind of good to the world, the haters of Zion come to an end.

The second hemistich cannot be the reply of those concerning whom the first is spoken; for they no longer exist. Nor are the members parallel; for parallelism would demand either a verb with a negative, or the positive statement of a curse. But the hemistich may be the expression of an antithesis which has to be supplied mentally in connection with the statements in the preceding verses: the haters of Zion perish, but Israel will flourish; as the soil broken up by the plough becomes more productive, so all the persecutions of Israel will contribute to the people's good. This antithesis would be clearly brought out in the antiphonal rendition of the Psalm by the temple choirs (Grætz). But it would seem that this liturgical formula did not belong to the Psalm as originally composed; the author's plan provided for an antithesis between strophes: he shows (a) the endurance of Israel through persecution, (b) the evanescent character of the enemy's existence. So the second strophe is virtually closed with 8*. Why then

the addition of 8^b? It is due, it seems, to a superstitious fear which would not allow that a piece, especially when rendered in public, should end with a curse or with words that suggested evil. This demand for a propitious conclusion has brought it about that in the case of the so-called יתקן (Isaiah, the Twelve Minor Prophets, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations), when these books are read in the synagogues, the reader repeats at the close the last verse but one (or the second from the last) in order that the final utterance may not be something unpleasant or ill-omened. Similarly here, the formula of priestly blessing turns the thought away from the untimely fate of the haters of Zion to the happiness of Israel, rejoicing in JHVH'S blessing. Cf. the notes on 128:6 and 125:5; also Ps. 27:14.

Notes on Ps. 125.

The assertion that JHVH is constantly guarding the interests of his people is but another form of exhortation to faith and trust, and implies the existence of distressing influences that tend to destroy confidence in God and give an excuse for heresy. The situation, of which these influences are the outcome, is declared to be that of subjection to the rule of the heathen. Finally, two classes of persons are contrasted, the first being composed of faithful believers while the latter is made up of those who have quitted the path of orthodoxy, i. e. heretics, whose fate will be that of a third class, the workers of iniquity or non-Jews. The Psalm must therefore be referred to a time when a foreign power was dominant in Palestine, and when the members of the congregation were separating into two factions, one party preserving strict orthodoxy while the other was disinclined to exact observance of the Law. In view of these facts, of the emphasis laid upon allegiance to the Law and of the strong church-feeling manifest in the Psalm, the period of composition must be sought in poet-exilic times; and here none fit so well as the times of Nehemiah. To be sure, the earlier part of the Maccabean epoch presents some very similar circumstances and conditions, and for this reason the Song might be assigned to the times of Judas when, by his capture of Jerusalem, 165 B. C., hopes were awakened, that the rod of Syrian rule would ere long be removed from the land (Hitzig). But it is a justifiable inference from the language of the Psalm that Jerusalem, as well as the country, is still subject to the foreign power; and also, if the piece was written previous to 165, but within the Maccabean age, the absence of allusion to the recent crushing calamities and the bright cheerful tone of the opening section remain to be accounted for.

It appears, then, that the Psalm belongs to the time of Nehemiah's activity (so Rosenm., Grätz). In purpose the piece resembles Ps. 128; it was intended to stimulate the Jews to faith, but especially to induce conformity to the Law; not only, however, is the promise of blessings employed as a means to secure this end, but also the threat of punishment for heresy is used to arouse the indifferent and careless. Clearly loose practices, due in part to external influences,

were prevalent: and as Ps. 128 fits best the situation in 444 when the Law was promulgated and accepted, so this poem should, it seems, be assigned to the time when Nehemiah's term of office was renewed, about 431; a reaction had in the meanwhile set in, and the requirements of the Law were being disregarded.

(1) Mention of any other mountain would have served to bring out the *tertium comparationis*; but Mt. Zion is named because it was the external seat of the church (Hgstb.), the holy hill of JHVH. The mountain is never shaken so that its characteristic firmness and stability become lost, but remains fixed, upright in its position; so too, those who trust in JHVH, the true adherents of the Jewish religion, will endure firm in their faith. Everything on Mt. Zion might be destroyed, the temple itself utterly swept away, but the hill would still stand; so the faith of Israel, though subjected to fierce storms of war, bitter persecutions and grave national disasters, continues steadfast because centered on the eternal rock, the living God; cf. Ps. 18:3; 92:16; 62:3.

(2) Many exegetes explain this verse as the picture of a city surrounded by protecting walls, some considering that the mountains themselves form a natural bulwark of defence against besieging armies. This idea seems quite natural since Jerusalem is girt about by high hills which shut it in like a wall; but the difficulties of approach could be overcome, and had been overcome before this Psalm was written. So that the point of comparison cannot, it would appear, be the idea of defence, but is rather that of unfailing presence, of constant association: the everlasting hills always stand about the city, Jerusalem and her mountains belong together, so JHVH is ever with his people. But while the hills are simply passive spectators of the varied fortunes of the place, God is deeply interested in the welfare of his people, and his presence is the synonym of protecting care; cf. Ps. 34:8; Zech. 2:9.

It is to be observed that here, as elsewhere in these Psalms, the religious side of life, the importance of firm adherence to the true religion is emphasized. None the less clear and important is the side thought connected with vs. 1, 2, that though the national existence and independence of the Jews may have been destroyed, the ideal side of Judaism, the religious ideas, cannot be destroyed; this fact is also brought out in the following verses.

(3) The proof of JHVH's unfailing goodness to Israel is to be shown (1) in release from evil influences, (2) in the divine blessing that descends on the truly upright, and (3) in the removal of the heretical.

The *rod* or scepter is the symbol of power and authority; cf. Ps. 2:9;
הָרַסם בַּשֶּׁבֶט בְּרוּל כְּכִלִּי יוֹצֵר תִּנְפָצִים *Thou wilt break them with a rod of iron, thou wilt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*; * Gen. 49:10; Num.

* Cf. the Assyrian phrase: *Kima xaḥbâti udaqqu* "he broke (the lands) in pieces like pots;" vid. H. Winckler, *Die Keilschrifttexte Sargon's*, Leipzig, 1889, *Die Inschrift auf der Rückseite der Platten*, I. 10.

24:17, 19; Zech. 10:11; it also denotes oppressive, cruel rule; cf. Isa. 14:5; **שבר יהוה מטה רשעים שבט משלים** JHVH has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of rulers; Isa. 9:3.

The wicked are non-Jews, who were capital examples of wickedness since they did not acknowledge JHVH; cf. Ps. 79:6; **שפך חמתך על הגוים אשר לא ידעוך ועל ממלכות אשר בשמך לא קראו**. *Pour out thy wrath on the heathen that do not recognize thee, and on the kingdoms that do not call on thy name*; Ps. 9:18; 129:4; 9:6. On the other hand the righteous are those whose ways are approved by God, the orthodox members of the congregation; cf. Ps. 1:6. **כי יודע יהוה דרך צדיקים**. *For JHVH approves the way of the righteous*. The lot of the righteous is equivalent to the heritage of Israel (Judg. 20:6; Ezek. 35:15; Ps. 61:6), i. e. the Holy Land; the expression doubtless contains a reference to the apportionment of the territory by lot; cf. Judg. cc. 1-3, and Josh. cc. 13 sqq. **גורל** is the exact equivalent of the English *lot*, a parcel or portion of ground.

Closely following upon the thoughts suggested by v. 2, that the protecting presence of JHVH is ever abiding around his people, comes the consideration of the contradiction to this assurance which the present state of affairs presents: If God be with us, how comes it that we are still subject to heathen rulers? In answer to this objection the poet, confident that JHVH's salvation is nigh to them that fear him (Ps. 85:10), declares his belief that this state of things will not last, but that the heathen rule will ere long be removed in order to promote the purity of the religion. The wickedness feared from contact and association with the ungodly is not so much the service of false gods, but rather defection from the party seeking the interests of the oppressed congregation (Hupf.); in consequence of this there would follow disregard of the law, and other departures from the path of orthodoxy.

(4.5) *The good* or, as the parallel expression puts it, *the upright in heart*, are Jews true to their religion; cf. Ps. 36:11; 64:11; 94:15; 97:11; 11:2; 32:11. The difference in form from the ordinary phrase (**ישרים בלבנות** alongside of **ישרי לב**) is due perhaps to the desire to lay emphasis upon religion of the heart, to make prominent the requirement of internal righteousness as opposed to mere outward conformity to the Law (Hupf., Olsh.). Directly the opposite of this class are those who turn aside to walk in crooked ways. The straight highway is the pure religion; cf. Ps. 44:19: **לא נסוג אחור לבנו ותט אשרנו מני ארחך** *Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps turned aside from thy way*; Deut. 9:16; Ps. 37:34; 5:8; Mal. 2:8, 9; Ps. 119:1. *Those that turn aside unto their crooked ways* are Jews who, though once orthodox, have allowed themselves to be led away, and now neglect the duties imposed by the Law and do not hesitate to do what it forbids; thus when Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem he found that the tithes

were not being paid, the Sabbath was being broken, while the law prohibiting intermarriage with the heathen had been disregarded and even priests had violated their covenants.*

The workers of iniquity is a term synonymous with *wicked*. There are but two great classes in the congregation, the orthodox and the heretical. The latter party will be classed with the unmistakably wicked men who do not so much as make a profession of serving JHVH, and concerning whose sins and the consequent judgment of divine wrath there can be no doubt, i. e. the heathen (Ewald, deWette, Hitz.) mentioned in v. 3; cf. Ps. 14:4; 28:3; 36:12 sq.

Here, as in Ps. 120:4, the *lex talionis* is the principle upon which the disposition of rewards and punishments is to be based; the righteous adherents to the true faith may expect blessings from God, while the heretical, who walk in the crooked by-ways of their own liberal views, instead of allowing themselves to be guided by the Law, will fall into the same destruction that awaits the heathen. The highest good that can be bestowed on the upright in heart is the removal of strangers, freedom from evil associations, and, to this end, deliverance from foreign oppressors; on the other hand, the greatest evil that can befall Jews who are careless in their observance of God's statutes, is to be cut off from the congregation, to be numbered with the heathen and so to share their fate. There comes out here the principle of exclusivism which Nehemiah put into such vigorous practice on the occasion of his second visit.

(5^b) Concerning these words a slight difference of opinion prevails. Delitzsch pictures the poet with uplifted hands bestowing in priestly manner the blessing upon the congregation. Others (Grätz) regard the phrase as a liturgical formula; cf. 128:6; 129:8. It stands in strong opposition to the preceding statement and may have arisen from unwillingness to end the Psalm with the words of a curse; or what is more likely, it is an emphatic reiteration of v. 4. With the stability of faith, the sustaining presence of God, the removal of foreign oppression and of heretical elements from the community, the blessing of peace must ensue. This peace is the end of tyranny, hostility, disunion, unrest; peace is freedom, harmony, unity, safety and happiness (Langer); cf. Ps. 119:165: **שלום רב** לאהבי תורתך ואין למו למכשול *They that love thy Law have abundant peace, and have no occasion to fall.*

Notes on Ps. 134.

This short Song seems well adapted to form the conclusion of the little Psalter, the name of which it bears. The contents—an exhortation to praise JHVH followed by an invocation of the divine blessing—are somewhat similar to

* E. g. the renegade priest Manasseh, Eliashib's grandson, who had married the daughter of Sanballat (Neh. 13:28), and who joined the Samaritan community. Cf. H. E. Ryle, *Canon of the Old Testament*, 1892, p. 92.

those of the doxologies which close the Book of Psalms; and it is quite possible that the Psalm owes its present position to this consideration.

It is an antiphony; the exhortation (vs. 1, 2) seems to be addressed to those who carry on the services in the temple; these respond with the formula of priestly blessing; from this it would appear that v. 3 was intended to be spoken by the priests, while vs. 1 and 2 contain the words of the congregation or its representative. The piece may therefore have been employed on some special occasion, or at some particular part of the service in the sanctuary. Some commentators, who hold to the theory of *Songs of Feast-Journeys*, suppose that the pilgrims, assembled in the temple at the time of the evening sacrifice, exhort the congregation (so Hgstb.), or the priests and Levites (so Bæthgen), to praise God, whereupon the priests reply with the benediction. More convincing evidence to prove the theory with reference to the other Songs must first be brought forward before this explanation can claim acceptance. The majority of commentators think of Levites watching in the temple at night, and take vs. 1 and 2 either as the address of an individual to his companions on guard, or as the greeting with which, at the change of the watches, the retiring party meets those coming on duty; this seems an unfounded conjecture, for, as Olshausen has observed, the Psalm was probably purposed to introduce the chanting of hymns, and must therefore have had a place in the public worship. The idea of Grætz appears then not inapt: on the basis of a Talmudic tradition* he argues that the Psalm was composed for use at the time when, in the nights of the Feasts of Booths, the services were varied with song in order to heighten the joy at the libation of water—perhaps therefore at the time of the Hasmonean queen Salome-Alexandra (circa 78—69 B. C.). There can be no doubt that the Psalms were employed in the services of the temple; and the tradition may be correct in so far as it testifies to the use† made of Ps. 134; but it does not follow that the Song was written for the purpose.

The supposition of Tiling, that the Psalm contains a joyful exhortation to the priests and Levites to perform their duties faithfully now that after the Return worship in the temple has been restored, agrees with the arguments of the other pieces in this group. But there is no evidence that services were held at night during this period. The difficulty occurred to Venema, who suggested that the phrase בְּלֵילוֹת commonly rendered *in the nights*, is properly a syncopated form of בְּהַלְלוֹת *with Hallels*. With this emendation the Psalm might serve as an introduction to the Hallel-Psalms which follows it (Ps. 135).

But another possibility should not be overlooked. The Psalm may have been employed during the nights of anxious watching when, at the time Nehemiah was

*In the Tosephta of the Mishnic Tract *Sukka*, IV. 7.

† Cf. A. D. Neubauer, *Authorship and Titles of the Psalms according to the Early Jewish Authorities*, in *Studia Biblica* II, 1890, p. 4 sqq.

rebuilding the walls, the citizens of Jerusalem were expecting an attack from their enemies.

(1) The term *servants of JHVH* might be applied to the congregation in general; but here, as the clause added by way of definition shows, it designates the priests and Levites who had in charge the various services of the temple; *to stand*, i. e. before the Lord, is the regular term employed to briefly describe the part taken by these persons in the worship of JHVH; cf. Deut. 10:8; Neh. 12:44; 1 Chron. 23:30; 2 Chron. 29:11; Deut. 18:7; Ezek. 44:11; Ps. 135:2; Hebrews 10:11.

De Wette and Olshausen suppose that an extraordinary assembly of the congregation has been made at night in the temple, and regard the address as an exhortation to penitence and piety; but for this idea there is no reason to be found in the Psalm. And while the possibility remains, that there were services in the sanctuary after nightfall, there is no evidence for it in the Old Testament. Some few commentators, therefore, are inclined to take לילות *nights* in the sense of *evenings*,* and think of services held at the hour of the evening offering (Hgsth.), but this seems forced. The correction suggested by Venema (בלילות = *with hallels*), though doubtful, would remove the difficulty, and would fit very well the meaning of ברכו which is here used in the sense of *praise in song*; cf. Ps. 66:8: ברכו עמים אלהינו *Praise our God, ye nations*; Ps. 68:27; 96:2.

(2) The lifting up of the hands is the gesture of prayer and adoration; cf. Ps. 28:2; 44:21; 142:2; Lam. 3:41; Hab. 3:10; 1 Tim. 2:8. The suppliants always turned toward the most Holy Place where the sacred symbol of God's presence was; cf. Ps. 138:2.

(3) If, according to the usual explanation, vs. 1 and 2 contain the greetings of the watchmen to those who are coming to take their places, it seems strange that the response is made as to an individual. But, on the other hand, the singular in an address to the congregation is very common.

The formula of blessing seems analogous to that prescribed for use by the priests in Num. 6:24sq. Zion is God's chosen place of abode on earth; hence the expression: *bless thee out of Zion*; cf. 128:5. Here again the omnipotence of JHVH is emphasized; cf. 121:2; 124:8.

*Cf. Assyrian *lilâti* "evenings."